Young Writers as Philosophers: Teaching Writing through Natural Inquiry and Community Dialogue

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Abstract

Current school culture places excessive emphasis on children reaching a minimum standard impairing their ability to reach their greatest potential. Students need to be challenged individually in authentic learning opportunities so that they can be supported to thrive as individuals. Teaching philosophically is one method that can address students' needs including those requiring enrichment and additional support. Students are able to sustain thinking on subjects of authentic interest and reflect and assist one another through a recursive process of dialogue in the community of inquiry and writing. A qualitative study based on a three-month intervention in a grade two classroom revealed that philosophical activity and writing instruction can be reciprocally beneficial for primary student learning. Data sources include the participant teacher's reflective journal, student-written reflections, assessed student work, video and a rubric measuring philosophical understanding.

Teaching writing philosophically provides an authentic and student-centred way of challenging students to deepen their reasoning skills, understanding and capacity for critical, creative and caring thinking. Philosophy can be taught within a subject so time allotment in the curricular timetable can be met. The study is significant in Prince Edward Island because there is currently no documentation of any such initiatives to share with other teachers. An engaging and evocative stimulus, community of inquiry scaffolding, reflection, metacognition, narrative as genre and an effective working environment are necessary to ensure students are secure participating in challenging activities. Philosophical activity can engage and deepen grade two students' thinking, while allowing them to play with ideas and imagine novel possibility.

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Prologue

"Was that the time you were bitten by the spider?" a sixth grade student asked me one day in the gymnasium. I wrote a narrative in my special book as a model for word choice when I taught the student in third grade. When I read the story aloud to the class all of the students were on the edge of their seats with wide eyes, waiting for the next part. The story was about when I went on a hot air balloon ride in Cairns, Australia. We landed in a field and, while helping to roll up the balloon, I saw a small spider on my foot. I was fearful instantly but tried to shake the feeling, assuming I was being paranoid. Two hours later my foot had swelled to be the size of a baseball but I visited the nearest pharmacy and rectified the situation the next day. Cairns has a reputation for hosting some dangerous creatures so I felt fortunate for the outcome in my story. I smiled at the student's question, not because I was surprised but because it was familiar. Students frequently asked me about that story since I had read it to them that day and I was used to answering questions about it. It amazed me that my students were connected to a story that had been read to them years before. Admittedly, the story was action packed but they remembered it in detail, found it to be accessible and learned from it. The students in my class that year excelled at word choice, several have since informed me that they would like to travel to Australia and I suspect they will not wear flip flops if they venture onto a hot air balloon.

An Accessible Framework

From the beginning I knew I would write this thesis in narrative form. Teachers, like students, learn from stories. When colleagues ask for teaching advice my first instinct is to tell a story of a situation that I have been through and what I learned from it. We are always careful to do so respectfully, assuring anonymity of students, but it is

helpful to hear about one another's mistakes and successes. I have an inventory of stories that I have collected from colleagues and experienced myself that I remember and draw from when I require direction. Many of my practices are based on fixing errors that I have made in the past and inspired by moments of memorable success. Stories make me a better teacher. Knowing my audience would be composed of teachers and boards of education, I wanted my thesis to be accessible and practical. Teachers and school board officials are busy so I hoped my work would be something they could pick up and read for enjoyment as well as knowledge. I also considered that the Philosophy for children (P4C) community includes teachers but much of the writing on the subject is done by students in graduate programs and professors who go into schools to teach P4C to children. I thought it would be beneficial to share a story of implementing philosophical activity in a classroom from a teacher's perspective. I have tremendous respect for my students' parents and the knowledge and interest they have regarding their children. I hoped that they, too, would be interested and able to read the thesis without being deterred by jargon and structure, limiting the thesis to those involved in the education field. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I wanted my research to be relevant to my own future teaching. I knew that I would not come up with a formula or best practice to follow because the dynamic structure of a classroom does not work like that. Teaching practice must instead be flexible and subject to change. I did not want to set up my thesis in the traditional structure because I felt that it would undermine the complexities of the classroom, while limiting access to those in academia. Instead I wanted to tell the story so that teachers, officials, parents and I could take what was useful from the story and use it to inform practice in synthesis with other experience and stories. Readers will not find a traditional literature review, data collection strategy,

results and methodology as chapters in the thesis, but will instead find it woven throughout the story. I hope that our story will help my readers as it has helped my students and I learn for future teaching and learning.

Chapter One

Chapter one includes a narrative to demonstrate the motivation behind my research. It acknowledges the context behind my interest in the subject and the problems I found in the school system, my classroom and the general culture around education. The narrative in chapter one subsumes the entire research process so readers may find it moving faster than later narratives. I have included reference to theorists within sentences for clarity, in order to distinguish theorists' thoughts from my own.

Chapter Two

The narrative in chapter two contains the research design. While staying true to narrative form, it includes information about the research questions, population of interest, sample size, methodology, data collection, time frame, timeline and ethical considerations. Like chapter one, the setting in the chapter two narrative covers an extended period of time.

Chapter Three

Chapter three slows the narrative pace to highlight detail of what happened when I started conducting research in the classroom. This pace continues for chapters four, five and six. I became familiar with theoretical controversy regarding appropriate stimuli to use when conducting philosophical activity with children and experienced this controversy in my own teaching instruction. This chapter includes my findings regarding benefits and disadvantages of using picture books versus traditional philosophical novels

(Lipman, 1982). Following the narrative I include expository writing discussing the theoretical context behind stimulus issues.

Chapter Four

Chapter four focuses on the community of inquiry[1] and how inherent scaffolding involved in the community of inquiry paired with overt scaffolding provides support for students in advancing their development. The teacher and community members take on an important role to ensure that this is successful. This chapter also explains the structure behind the community of inquiry and how it provides the opportunity to teach students critical thinking skills explicitly. The expository component includes theory behind the community of inquiry and its utility in deepening student understanding and sustained thinking.

Chapter Five

Chapter five involves a detailed investigation of narrative and the draw that students had to both narrative fiction and personal narrative as genres. Students liked thinking about philosophical ideas through asking questions and then exploring those questions when writing fantasy, narrative fiction and realistic fiction stories. Chapter five explores narrative theory with particular attention to Jerome Bruner.

Chapter Six

Reflection, meditation, and metacognition were necessary to clarify findings and make changes to the program accordingly. These components helped students sustain thinking about subjects, write and improve active participation in the community of

[1] The community of inquiry is a group session where students have an opportunity to generate philosophical questions based on a stimulus, engage in philosophical discussion about the questions and then reflect in metacognition exercises about the learning itself. The physical structure recommended for the community of inquiry is a circle.

inquiry because they were explicitly taught how to do so. Through reflection, students indicated the importance of having a quiet environment to work and maintain concentration so we used meditation and metacognition skills to teach explicit active listening skills and empathy toward different learning preferences. Reflection, meditation and metacognition not only aided the quiet environment but allowed students to reflect on their own learning and improve strategies accordingly. This chapter includes a narrative and expository section.

Epilogue

In chapters three to five I discuss the features I found necessary for conducting philosophical activity with my class successfully. Students needed to connect to picture books, be supported within the community of inquiry and relate to Philosophy through narrative fiction and realistic fiction. Chapter six involves the reflective practices that clarified these realizations. The epilogue features a narrative about Dara and Erin, which helps to highlight findings. Reflection on the study clarified the following:

1. Teaching philosophically requires fluidity and flexibility because program direction and activities are derived from authentic student interest.
2. Teaching philosophically enables teachers to help students requiring enrichment and additional support to be both challenged and successful in reaching their potential.

Theoretical Relevance

I was able to connect several theorists to my research in addition to traditional P4C literature. I identified with Bruner's advocacy for students using their wits and skills to their fullest potential, making the process of education accessible so that it is not alien to them, helping children discover things for themselves and helping learners

deepen their understanding of the world (Bruner, 1996, p. 67; 2006, p. 184; 1962, p. 123). I found Bruner's emphasis on process rather than content appealing and his theories were a part of my motivation in conducting the study. Bruner's theories about narrative were useful both in their reference to shaking up familiarities and using them to understand one's self and life better (Bruner, 2008, p. 102; 2003, p. 211). I found student feedback connected to Bruner's ideas in both ways. Students were able to explore dynamics that happened in the classroom safely through play and narrative fiction. They could think about issues and dynamics that troubled them through writing stories, while making up characters and events so that they did not have to confront issues directly. Students were able to explore their own experiences and selves through writing realistic fiction. Some students gravitated to one mode more than the other and I left this relatively open. Bruner's theories were significant to the community of inquiry because he suggests that we mesh our narratives within a community of life stories, which was what transpired in the community of inquiry (Bruner, 2004, p. 699). Students had the opportunity to do this through discussion and through sharing their writing.

Eisner's (1985) theories reinforce Bruner's. He suggests teaching students in specific disciplines ignores the distinct interests that students have (p. 70). This is valuable to my research because, teaching philosophically, students begin from questions. These questions are at the heart of student interest because they are created by students. Providing the stimulus is open to various disciplines, students have autonomy in their choices. Eisner's (2009) theories relate to my research further in his acknowledgement that students progress at different rates (p. 34). I think most people involved in education would agree with this statement. The scaffolding nature of the community of inquiry addresses this concern directly because students have an

opportunity to learn from and lean on peers, while they reach the next stage of development. Vygotsky's (1978) theories were useful as well because he discusses how children can do more with assistance than they can do alone (p. 85). The community of inquiry provides this assistance. Scaffolding allows children to move to the next stage of development instead of recycling concepts they have already achieved (p. 89). This is possible in P4C because children listen, communicate and discuss based on their capabilities and the supportive nature of the environment makes it accessible for everyone. Opportunity to read writing aloud gave the children the opportunity to imitate one another, which Vygotsky suggests helps children move beyond what they would have achieved independently (p. 88).

Theory was relevant for emphasizing the importance of trusting the capability of students. Montessori (2009) and Dewey's (2009) theories were beneficial for understanding the importance of having an authentic situation in the classroom rather than only preparing for the future (p. 36, p. 36). Children were engaged in actual discussion about topics that interested them rather than trivial conversation to learn skills. Scardamalia's (2002) theories highlight children's capabilities through their emphasis that children are capable of solving difficult problems at an early age. I found that, when material was scaffolded properly, children could think about and discuss topics in depth. Dewey's (1959) work was also instrumental in clarifying the meaning of child-centred education (p. 95). I recognized that instructional practice needs to be centred on the child but does not necessarily need to be directed by the child. Teachers have instructional expertise that is useful and often needed. I struggled with this when conducting research because I was also aware of the need for students to have autonomy in their own learning, as Freire (1987) suggests (pp. 108-109). Although Freire worked

with oppressed adult Brazilians, I was aware of parallels in my classroom because students had not been given choice in their curriculum or the way it was presented to them. I resolved the conflict in theory by choosing the picture book stimulus according to what I felt children would benefit from, keeping it child-centred, while allowing students to have autonomy in the philosophical questions they chose to vote on, discuss and write about. Shor and Freire (1987) refer to this balance when they discuss that freedom needs authority to be free (p. 91). I think it was beneficial for me to choose picture books as stimuli because I could connect them with classroom needs, which happened to involve classroom dynamics. With authority children felt comfortable discussing issues from the books, which helped them deal with issues in the classroom, creating a liberated environment.

Csikzentmihalyi's (1990) theory regarding flow was instrumental in helping me clarify my students' assertions that they needed a quiet environment in which to concentrate. Csikzentmihalyi asserts that we can resolve meaning when our purpose merges with universal flow (p. 240). Students had purpose through their philosophical questions and discussion about meaning but were finding it difficult to concentrate. They were finding it difficult to reach a state of concentration where they could be involved in an activity without anything else entering their working space (p. 4). Reflecting on Csikzentmihalyi's work, I realized that students needed work on attention through meditation, metacognition and finding security within a quiet classroom working space (p. 33, 59). Students articulated their frustration regarding noise clearly in the data so it was necessary that I address the problem. Understanding the concept of flow and identifying circumstances that individual students need to achieve that state helped greatly.

I acknowledge that I offer little criticism of these theories in respect to child-centred learning and teaching to unique and distinct interests of children. The reason for this is that my research findings, which will be made evident, largely correspond with theories supporting student autonomy in learning and a focus on individual, rather than collective, student goals. The irony lies in the contrast between these theories and my research and the standardized values of the current educational culture that permeates schools, school districts and the public at large. The present educational framework does not follow the guidance of these theorists with its current emphasis on accountability and standardization. Robinson's (2001) theories are useful in highlighting this fact with his suggestion that the education system educates creativity out of children, which is problematic when creativity needs to be at the centre of integrating material. He also emphasizes the importance for children to make and learn from mistakes (2001). P4C allows and encourages children to make mistakes while being supported in the community of inquiry and creativity is nurtured when students create novel problems and solutions. My criticism is not for the theory but for the practice ignoring the theory. Many leading theorists agree with centring education on student interest and meaning rather than standards and content, yet this is not the philosophy our system follows in practice.

Anonymity

The clarity that emerged through writing this narrative suggests that writing narrative can be valuable for self-discovery as well as synthesizing and understanding meaning. The imaginative component offered security to play with ideas in a way that allowed me to take liberties – a freedom important for my own security as well as that of my students. Not only does story imitate life and vice versa but it clearly shapes the way

we understand and experience the world (Bruner, 2003, p. 59). I found self-discovery through my narrative, as my students did in theirs. I also found the freedom to play with ideas and seek meaning through reflection. All names in the narrative are pseudonyms. I have changed details to preserve anonymity and maintain consistency.

Chapter One

The Value of Helping Children Engage in Philosophical Inquiry

Trapped

I stood in my classroom staring out the window. It was January of 2010 and I watched as snowflakes fell to the ground. It was a great day at school but I found myself relieved that I would be attending my first Master of Education class that night. It was time. I had considered myself an independent thinker in my teaching but slowly that was changing and it scared me. I stood bound by hegemonic cuffs, although I did not feel them tighten around my wrists. Freely I seemed to embrace them as I went about teaching. The cuffs seemed to grow tighter over the years, discretely contracting in a way that was undetectable even to me, making it impossible to put my finger on when they had become so small. Too small to move or stretch flexibly, too small to react to individual circumstances and differences and yet the cuffs had such a guiding and comfortable force that they were difficult to deconstruct. Attempting to deconstruct them felt like breaking through impermeable liquid, binding me in safety, comfort and sameness. I had not fastened the cuffs, nor did the school or the district. Somehow, a combination of competing educational influences had. I looked in the mirror hanging on the wall and thought "I am no longer the autonomous teacher standing in front of the children that I once was." I was more experienced, yes, and perhaps more effective measured against the prescribed rubric of the day. But the autonomous space that once dominated my teaching seemed to have shrunk with the cuffs in a disturbingly comfortable way. I felt baffled by the irony of being a former Philosophy student trapped so deep in the hegemonic culture of my school and the education system that I could not deconstruct them.

I had hopes for the program and the thesis I would come to write. I hoped that deconstructing the classroom space would help me see value in allowing my students to deconstruct their own educational space. I wanted to help my students deconstruct their position; a difficult position considering that even teachers, in a more powerful position, are stifled in what they teach and how they teach it. I thought of deconstructing educational space as making power relationships in my class and school transparent so that responsibilities and privileges were both clear and eligible for critique. I hoped that including metacognition would help with my goal for students to reflect on the concept of learning itself. Again, I looked at the snowflakes fall noticing that they appeared identical, while knowing they were each unique. I thought about teaching, "If we continue to teach more and more alike and do not question and deconstruct it, we will not only be standardizing the outcomes we hope for our students to achieve but the way we teach those outcomes as well." I found this problematic considering that students do not all learn in the same way. If we were to teach alike then space would not allow for student voices in learning. "We must learn how we ourselves can find autonomy within the curriculum," I thought, "if we want our students to deconstruct educational space and the world around them."

I moved away from the window and sat at my desk thinking about ideas that had been running through my mind. I had found myself morphing into a teaching presence that mirrored my colleagues. I modelled them more and more. This was not completely negative because I worked with great teachers but I felt a loss in independence and identified this as a problem. As I saw my colleagues becoming more and more alike I was left wondering about the impact this would have on our students. "When we expect students to meet a standard or outcome in exactly the same way we are forcing them into

identical molds," I thought. There was a parallel with teachers. "When teachers are encouraged and professionally developed to teach in similar ways, with similar resources and practices, I worry that students will be taught in similar fashions because their teachers were pedagogically developed similarly." I knew that identical instructional practices did not necessarily follow from similar professional development but I was concerned that professional development focused on explicit methods and activities for instruction as opposed to providing teachers with time for discussion and independent thinking about how best to teach curriculum outcomes. I thought about my instructional practices more thoroughly when I had fewer tools at my disposal, enabling me to plan for my individual students in novel ways. I found it difficult to think for myself when others were constantly thinking for me and I got used to using resources frequently due to efficiency and trust in the authority that had introduced them to me. I thought about standardized tests and standardization in general, that had been implemented in the Eastern School District (Prince Edward Island and Early Childhood Development, 2012) since the beginning of my four-year teaching career. Even teacher training and assessment was standardized with implementation of Professional Learning Communities. The motivation behind such changes was, arguably, to ensure all students in the Eastern School District received quality education but then there were the figurative handcuffs. The handcuffs prevented us from understanding what quality meant.

I flipped the page in my daybook making sure everything was ready for the next day and thought about power. The exercise of power in such change was obvious. Someone decided on resources, teacher training and philosophies for teachers to follow but key voices were missing in the decision-making process and the more we became

similar, the smaller the voices became. A question came to mind: “Do students have a voice in helping create environments in which they can grow? Where do they fit in the process of standardizing our schools?” I thought about how standardization inherently required us to make them fit. I had encountered a situation that day with a student where I needed to pull everything out of my bag of tricks to make learning happen and have her recognize the difference between upper and lowercase letters when, perhaps, she had not been ready for the concept. I left school worrying that we were doing a disservice to students if our goal was to teach them the same things in the same ways when, as humans, we are all different.

After my class that evening, I thought about the schooling I had had to date. As a Philosophy student at university, I had been taught skills not addressed in prior schooling or even since. I was given space to enquire about parts of the world that puzzled me. I could think about them critically, discuss them with peers and come to understand them better. “Philosophy,” I thought, “inherently addressed deeper thinking, inferencing and reasoning; desired outcomes that were not being addressed in my classroom because the curriculum does not include them specifically and we had not been given the professional opportunities to develop the skills to teach them.” I thought about professional development for a moment because that was also the very thing that might be limiting our classroom experience. Professional development was not meant to instruct specific ways to teach skills but instead to give the time and space to converse and explore teaching skills, collaborating toward collective capacity to teach students effectively.

Taking a quick mental note of the people I knew, I recalled that not every student I knew went to university and not all of those students took Philosophy classes. I

concluded that the majority of students would not be exposed to explicit philosophical inquiry throughout their lives. I had an idea that if students were taught philosophical skills from primary school on then they would gain an understanding of the world beyond the "facts" they read in books. They could learn to question assumptions and beliefs, assess accuracy and relevance and become adept at other skills necessary to succeed in future. My goal was to educate critical citizens; for students to view situations from multiple perspectives, create novel problems, form solutions to those problems and question their world and relationships within it. Looking at the pile of scribblers on my desk, I thought about my students and their writing. I wanted them engaged in writing but I also wanted them writing reflective, thoughtful writing so they could sustain engagement over time. It was important to me that students found material authentically interesting so that it would sustain learning engagement, as opposed to flashy materials and teaching tools that were only interesting for short periods of time. My interest was piqued. I wanted to know if philosophical activity could stimulate students' writing and whether reflection in the writing process could assist students in the goals for critical citizenship.

A Problem I could not Deny

It was not long before I found myself reading Lao Tzu (n.d./1988[2]) and thinking about knowledge and how we reach it. I was fascinated that he reached wisdom about things we continue to grapple with. Thousands of years ago he stated that "we join spokes together in a wheel but it is the center hole that makes the wagon move" (p. 11). Yet the practicality of such wisdom was absent in education. "When curricular

[2] Lao-tzu, the author of the Tao te Ching "may have been an older contemporary of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.)" (Mitchell, 1988, n.p.).

fragments meet authentically there can be momentum in learning," I thought, "but students lack ability to functionally use information they have learned if content is taught without sufficient context. Learning would exist in isolation and could not rely on the relationship it had with other content to further deepen meaning and understanding. The hole at the centre of the wheel is also of central importance in learning because it forms context behind learning and the meaning that frames it." In practice the centre and context are the questions and discussion topics. Meaning derives from the discussion topic, or contextual centre, and motivates learning as the wheel moves. Momentum in discussion occurs with the rotation of the wheel motivated by the questions and discussion topics in the centre. The question or topic must be relevant enough to cause this tweak or motivation of interest to occur. Curriculum needs a central purpose that brings information spokes together, linking fragments to a broader goal or theme, so that content can be relevant to students. My thoughts drifted to my students and the lacking engagement I observed in some of them. It occurred to me that my colleagues and I were immersed in resources that addressed specific learning outcomes, and authentic learning intended to challenge and motivate students was getting lost in the process. There were so many resources and specific skills to teach that it was difficult to find space to tailor my work for each individual student in my class. Students in general have been found to experience low engagement in school and learning needs to take place in forums that value compelling inquiry (The Canadian Education Association, 2009, p. 7). My students needed challenge at a younger age and to be given autonomy to choose their own learning materials (p. 71). I had read theorists who highlighted how the education system, in effect, educated creativity out of children (Robinson, 2001). My students, and I believed other students as well, were not being given responsibility and authority in

their learning. Subject matter was taught separately, fragmented, from other subject matter and curriculum. Students were able to choose subjects to write about but were not given initial autonomy in exploring and discussing topics so that they could develop confidence in taking responsibility over their own learning and what they wanted to explore. Since reading Robinson (2001) I had been thinking about the importance of giving students space to exercise their creativity. I realized that subjects may be linked together in the guise of integration, but without student wonder, curiosity and creativity (Robinson, 2001) at the hub of the integrative process, the spokes of the curricular wheel have nothing to connect them. "As the teacher," I thought "I must join together the spokes of the curricular wheel and generate cyclical learning so that I can facilitate momentum in my students' learning."

The curriculum in Prince Edward Island encourages children to use reasoning skills and critical thinking but resources available to us as teachers focus on content-specific areas of reading and writing, such as phonics, organization, genre writing and writing traits. Resources that focus on particulars instead of context are prescriptive with everything laid out in a predetermined plan, frequently distributed district or province wide. I found a Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2010-2011) link to an Education Handbook for School Administrators, which listed goals of public education. I was beside myself as I read that goals are to enable students to develop an appreciation for learning, curiosity and creativity, the ability to think critically, acquire skills to understand and express ideas and to understand the world (p. 24). My own teaching philosophy was consistent with all of these skills and yet resources and tools were not given to me so I could focus on them in classrooms. "Arguably," I thought, "when resources and tools are excessively

standardized teachers might not even be given space to practice these skills in classrooms." I had seen teachers teach within the context of these broader goals but I thought this was difficult to expect of teachers when the visibility of the goals was limited to a handbook for administrators within specific links on a website. I was confused as I sat reflecting on the research I had done. I could not help saying out loud: "If these are the primary goals then they should be at the forefront of professional development and consideration for teachers." Instead the majority of the emphasis was on specific strategies meant to teach specific outcomes. The individual goals obscured the greater goals that the individual goals were meant to help accomplish.

Professional development and professional reading opportunities did not allow space to debate or even converse about such things. "Even if teachers can integrate subject matter and connect material through integration," I thought, "this does not mean that space is given for student input, deeper understanding, and higher level thinking. Simply because a school day is planned by curriculum design and relates with other material being learned does not mean that students will be challenged by that material, have freedom and time to take it deeper or even that the classroom would be set up in a way encouraging that level of engagement." I left the research on my desk at home, excited that the general philosophies linked with my ideas but frustrated that the execution of the goals did not. I felt that teaching instruction had become excessively standardized. It seemed to be fragmented to the extent that students, including my own, were not challenged to write or to think about deeper, more complex questions. I also had students who needed additional support and enrichment. The standard expectation meant nothing to the students who came in above it and I knew that I needed to meet their needs as well as those needing support. I closed my eyes, torn between the need for

sleep and the need to think about individual students and individual potential, and concentrated on what it would take to teach students in terms of their individual needs.

Acknowledging Individuality

"It is unquestionably the function of education to enable people, individual human beings, to operate at their fullest potential, to equip them with the tools and sense of opportunity to use their wits, skills and passions to the fullest" (Bruner, 1996, p. 67).

Attempting an analogy to help clarify things for myself I thought about two jewellery stores that I had visited earlier in the week; while one featured items for uniqueness, the other sorted items in bulk. "Jewels have special status in our society. We hold them dear and protect them as they are, marvelling at the unique elements that qualify their essence." My thumb shifted down to feel the smooth front of my great grandmother's engagement ring. "The ring is so special to me," I thought, "but not because the diamond is large or even polished. The diamond is actually quite worn and tiny." I held the ring up to my eye squinting to view the diamond. It was beautiful and unique. The ring had been repaired at least twice to my knowledge so it had morphed and aged into something distinct from anything else and this distinction was what made it so special to me. Jewellers have the space and opportunity to work with each jewel individually, taking time and care so that each one can realize individual potential, strength and beauty. Some jewels are similar but each one is distinct enough to require individual attention so that its features, no matter how minute they may be, are cared for. Jewels are not necessarily beautiful or ready in their purest form, as they first must be cut and polished with the careful attention of the jeweller. Some jewels are opalescent; changing depending on their experience with light in their environment and then reflect light so the jewel has a reciprocal influence." I thought of the jeweller in the store and

realized that she had autonomy to shape and mount her jewels within the limits and potential of their individual traits.

Then there was the other store where costume jewellery hung in abundance. Each piece mirrored the one beside it and hung with a group of clones. The costume jewels were obviously mass produced from inexpensive materials. Unique spots or eccentricities in material were discarded or masked so as not to ruin the product, the prototype desired. The worker in this store had a different role. She filled the orders of management; an authority that was not present within the store but instead looked on from outside, analyzing numbers and reports, indicating productivity of workers in the shop and the success of jewels on paper. Something was missing in that store as compared to the jewellery store. I thought about the products. "They are changed to meet the desired outcome instead of having the outcomes moulded around that which they already are."

I wanted to be like the jeweller, with space to make decisions based on the individual, sometimes eccentric, needs and strengths of my students. I wanted space to cherish uniqueness and maximize the influence that students might have. I wanted to give my students space to radiate individual beauty and let my work depend on them rather than shape them. They too could be rough in their purest forms but that did not take away from the special entities they were and had potential to become. I wanted autonomy over my classroom space and responsibility for my own productivity as it reflected the unique needs and depth of my students. Unfortunately my experience in the classroom was closer to the assembly line in the shop. My students did not hold the privilege of having their distinctive features corrected and shaped to match who they were as opposed to who the teachers and school wanted them to be. Instead of having

their uniqueness recognized as valuable, like the cherished jewel, they were socialized and changed. I felt myself become sleepy and promised to follow up on my thoughts the next day.

I read Adler (2009) who advocates for everyone to have the same quality schooling (p. 177). I found myself fidgeting and agitated as I read because the same quality schooling means something entirely different to me than it did to him. Students arrive in our classrooms with a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences so I knew they would not receive the same quality of education if we were to teach them the same things in the same way. I had connected more to Noddings (2009) who suggests that the student who is interested in the subject might do very well because he or she is engaged but the student whose interests lie elsewhere is not as likely to succeed (p. 183). I sighed as I took notes: "we are not setting students up to have an equal quality of education if some are interested and some are not." I could not confirm whether it was possible to provide equal education to all but I was ready to assert that it would be more equitable to tap into the genuine and authentically relevant interests of as many students as possible. Reading more I reflected, "if the greatest burden of teachers in schools is teaching students things that they have no desire in learning (Noddings, 2009) then we should be figuring out what they want to learn and go from there" (p. 184). Adler (2009) views elective courses as appropriate only if students are ready to specialize but giving students choice would be one way to reach them as early as primary school (p. 178). I thought about children being members of their communities from the moment they are born. They are not waiting to be citizens but are citizens (Haynes, 2008, p. 22). I leaned back with the notes I had taken while reading, attempting to find clarity, "it does not

make sense to treat children as drones waiting to be filled until they are adults. Children have interests as well and are capable of articulating those interests."

Individual Potential versus Minimum for Masses

I was not content with the goal of having everyone meet a minimum standard or benchmark before moving to the next level. There may be nothing more gratifying or rewarding than teaching a student who worked hard to reach grade level in writing, but there were other students in the class. I thought of my struggling students and did not want to suggest they be set aside so that I could challenge students needing enrichment or an additional push. I wanted to find a way to challenge all students to improve their abilities, reach or transcend their individual potential, look at the world with purpose and become more reasonable, the "fourth r" that is typically forgotten when thinking about reading, writing and arithmetic (Gregory, 2008, p. 7). I had seen children think critically, creatively and caringly so the goal of helping students to think reasonably was not outside the realm of possibility (p. 7). I wanted my students to think critically, creatively, caringly and reasonably. I wondered if children might not be able to use philosophical approaches to achieve this goal. I did not need to question whether the curriculum supported thinking critically and creatively, but rather, whether the resources existed to do so (Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 1991). While critical thinking was a popular term, resources and professional development did nothing to explicitly teach how to execute the skill. We cannot assume students will learn to think critically or look at text critically by accident. I discovered that Philosophy includes ingredients to meet those objectives explicitly and (P4C) or the Philosophy for children program would do so in developmentally appropriate ways for children.

In September, 2010 I found myself immersed in research about Philosophy for children, my mind drifting back to the origin of the idea. I was taking a Critical Pedagogy class and the professor mentioned work she had done with Philosophy and high school students in Ontario. This immediately intrigued my Philosophy background, and, in discussion with her, I learned about Haynes' (2008) book involving Philosophy and primary children. That very day I emailed to change my thesis direction and have been lost in thoughts and research about Philosophy and children ever since. I came to learn that there were several programs involving children and Philosophy. I became familiar with P4C, Philosophy with children, community of inquiry and pre-college Philosophy. I indentified strongly with P4C because it was the founding body of Philosophy for children but I chose to learn and utilize resources from Philosophy with children as well. The curriculum suggests benefits of engaging in critical activity through writing, which enabled me to decide that teaching writing philosophically would help to challenge students individually while allowing support for students who needed it (Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 1991). I took time to read about Lipman (1991) who founded the P4C program to address an absence in critical thought in the United States. I discovered the program includes resources and teaching approaches specifically designed to teach Philosophy to children. The program is often taught in 30 minute blocks for P-K, 45 minute blocks for lower grades and 60 minute blocks for higher grades as a separate subject. I thought embedding Philosophy within writing might have potential since time allotment within curriculum was a factor governing what was and was not given teaching time within recommended school subject time allotment (Gregory, 2008, p. 51). This seemed more and more feasible as I began to make connections with philosophical instruction and

curriculum. I read the curriculum's (1991) assertion that "a supportive environment is crucial for students who lack confidence in themselves as learners" (p. 9). I was struck by how the idea of a supportive environment supported the community of inquiry, which was a fundamental part of P4C and how inherent empowerment in P4C could help children who lack confidence. The curriculum suggests teachers give students experiences that "engage them in worthwhile communication situations…, allow them to construct meaning and connect, collaborate and communicate with each other… and give them a sense of ownership of learning and assessment tasks" (p. 9). I was excited that Philosophical activity would allow students to collaborate with each other orally and in writing. They could ask questions that were authentic to them and their understanding of the world and have a sense of ownership over learning because they could guide the subject matter to write about. Philosophical instruction would give space for students to consider perspectives from students with communication difficulties, gifted and talented students, students with different learning preferences, English as additional language students and would be an avenue for valuing social and cultural diversity and gender inclusion (pp. 3-10). I was able to link philosophical instruction with General Curriculum Outcomes for "Writing and Other Ways of Representing" as well (p. 15). Reading on, I saw that the first specified students use writing or other modes to "explore, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, experiences and learnings." It also specified that students were "to use their imaginations" (p. 15). I knew Philosophy for children would do precisely this and the collaborative goal from the second outcome would be evident in the community of inquiry because students would have space to discuss ideas from text and clarify their thoughts (p. 15). Students would also be able to

use a "range of strategies to develop effective writing" when writing about the philosophical ideas and questions they had (p. 15).

I started to see more clearly how philosophical instruction could help me teach students individually because they would be able to progress at their own rate, exploring subjects of interest to them. I knew my students brought different strengths to school and that these strengths played roles in what motivated them. If they felt weak at something they were less likely to want to do it, let alone succeed. They needed opportunities to utilize their strengths so they could experience success and from there move on to strengthen their weaknesses. I had been thinking a lot about Dewey (2009) and Montessori's (2009) discussions involving students living in classrooms. "If we value diverse talents and strengths of individuals in life, as we do in society (Montessori, 2009)," I thought, "I should be valuing this 'life' in my classroom" (p. 36). My students lived as they walked into the school and resided in the classroom each day so I should have been letting them live in the present instead of just in preparation for the future (Dewey, 2009, p. 36). Engaging students in philosophical instruction would give them opportunities to converse with peers and teachers and become more in tune with what interested them because they would have the opportunity to discuss and experiment with different questions and subjects. They could foster new interests as they listened critically and analyzed ideas and opinions from other students in the class. Incorporating philosophical activity into writing instruction would have potential to arise from student interests and assist them in generating other interests because they might become curious about the interests their peers had.

I was note-taking again and had scrawled "teachers" at the top of my page. P4C would offer opportunity for teachers. Teachers could take on a different role if students

learned for its inherent value. Instead of being messengers of content they could become part of the message synthesis itself. They could take a guiding and collaborative role with students as opposed to filling them with knowledge (Bruner, 2006, p. 184). I thought about resources and how they may be necessary in education but are not sufficient. We needed a better understanding of what should be taught to each individual specifically in order to make him or her a better human being and as such, making the process less alienating (p. 151). I wrote a note: "as educators we should have higher expectations than engaging students' short-term interest in order for them to meet minimum standards. We must question what students are missing when focus is placed on outcomes instead of the processes and meanings behind learning outcomes."

More and more, the idea came together that philosophical instruction would help in teaching individual students. Reading Eisner (1985) I thought about how important it was to teach students individually according to what motivated them individually. Learning from specific disciplines might ignore their uniqueness, while disabling them from developing their own unique interests (p. 70). Learning this way would not be applicable for a child because she would not be able to make connections across subject matter and relate them to her own interests and schema. Students could have the opportunity to develop critical understanding of material if we could go beyond the specifics of facts and answers and begin with questions.

I began to clarify my goal to support students in learning to look at content critically and how to take responsibility for their learning while reading two of Freire's works (1987, 1982). It would make more sense for students to learn some amount of content and have the opportunity to reflect rigorously on that content in a critical way than to learn a large breadth of content (Freire, 1987, p. 87). The way teaching

methodology was framed would then become more important than the teaching methodology itself (p. 40). I found it interesting that Freire suggests lecture style teaching is not inherently bad and can instead be effective when used to pose a challenge for students to think about and problematize (p. 40). As I added to my notes, I became more certain that critical awareness, questioning and the space to acknowledge and support ideas of diverse and unique individuals are at the heart of teaching as opposed to the way information is taught. This would open possibility for students to take on responsibility to "illuminate" learning as individuals with teachers facilitating (Freire, 1987, pp. 108-109). Continuing, I read, "it is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors" (Freire, 1982, p. 42). I wrote down teacher's role with a colon and continued "our role as teachers is not to empower students, for that would only lead to hypocrisy. It is, rather, to provide students with tools and skill sets, which enable them to direct and lead their own learning from a critical framework." "As teachers," I thought, "we are not the 'lamp-lighters' but help to prepare the wick so the lamps can light themselves" (Freire, 1982, p. 108). Although invisible, my limitations, described previously with the handcuff analogy, were tangible and I knew my students were in a similar position because I had power over them as their teacher. If my liberties were in jeopardy then their liberties must have been also. I knew that my job was more complicated than "freeing my students". Similarly, I knew the school board could not simply "free" its teachers because a certain amount of authority and knowledge is necessary to move forward. Otherwise competing liberties would prevent progress. P4C would enable teachers and students to have freedom in the direction their learning took, while providing security through the explicit teaching of the structure to make this

possible. P4C could be the medium used to prepare the wick and students could follow that medium to "light themselves" (p. 108).

My mind went back to the curriculum and how it was more relevant to teachers than it was for students (Bruner, 1977) so it was important to find a way for students to be represented within it (p. xv). The content of the curriculum could not be changed, so perhaps the best way to encourage uniqueness in my students would be to open up the process and allow students to give direction in their learning. This type of teaching would allow students autonomy in their learning and challenge them to rise above the dangerous minimum because they could discover what was going on around them and the content of their own thoughts (Bruner, 1971, p. 72). I thought about how I would welcome blurring the teacher-student relationship to allow for collaboration and multiple roles so that students could learn and teach while teachers teach and learn simultaneously from each other (Freire, 1970, p. 67). I liked the thought of this freedom, "freedom to aid and abet [the learner] on her own voyage" and consequently help the child to discover things for herself (Bruner, 1996, p. 115; 1962, p. 123).

Becoming confident with my ability to link philosophical instruction with curriculum obligations, I began looking into what P4C involved. The importance of student engagement and student-led decision making to Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980) was apparent so I was quick to note this in my journal. I learned and agreed that forcing children to learn would not be necessary if the process of education had relevance for them (p. 5). I read the discussion about the community of inquiry's importance and the necessity that it include a readiness to reason. It also required respect among and between students themselves and the teacher (p. 45). I found the emphasis placed on professional development for teachers interesting in order to deal with logic

and sensitivity involved in ethics and metaphysics when teaching philosophically (p. 46). Lipman et al. (1980), I thought, regard the teacher as important because the teacher can structure surroundings so children have capacity to grow their philosophical understanding (p. 83). Lipman et al. (1980) discuss the natural wonder children possess, which I found particularly inspiring because this curiosity and imagination might be able to engage children in the writing process (pp. 131-204). I wondered if this natural sense of wondering could be used to stimulate questioning and theorizing in the writing process. Enthralled by Lipman (1993), I tried to learn as much as possible. I learned that he considers teaching good thinking to be the central goal of education. He also considers critical and creative thinking to be the two most important factors for teaching good thinking skills (p. 2). P4C is meant for children at the elementary and secondary school level. It is made up of seven subprogrammes, each including a reader and instruction manual to support the classroom as a community of inquiry based on the Philosophy curriculum (p. 7). Teachers are meant to strengthen students' reasoning, while avoiding influencing students with personal opinions (p. 7). He distinguishes the P4C movement from Dewey's theory of inquiry in stating that the purpose ought to be promoting the thinking process rather than the solution of problems thought about (p. 8). While it may not be necessary to create a binary between the two approaches, as a primary classroom teacher, I found the specific emphasis Lipman gives to process inspirational. Mastering the process is the end goal that I have for my students. If they can succeed in the process then they will be able to succeed independently and find solutions when they need them.

Fictional characters in the program's readers model the inquiry process intended for students to emulate as members of the community of inquiry (pp. 9-10). The

research, and thinking about the research, gave me comfort. While I was familiar with Philosophy and philosophical inquiry, I felt rusty. The modelling would be helpful for me as well as the students in guiding the nature of the inquiry. The novels work sequentially, building on skills learned in previous novels. Teachers use them as a beginning stimulus and then students ask philosophical questions of interest to them inspired by the novels. Students discuss their questions with peers in a community of inquiry. Novels are supported by the curriculum with discussion plans designed to explicitly teach philosophical skills. The curriculum and discussion plans are meant to assist teachers so that they can teach Philosophy effectively without necessarily having a Philosophy background. This is important considering most teachers were not exposed to Philosophy in prior schooling like they were the other subjects. The novels, which I had taken from the library, seemed dated but I was willing to give them a try.

One night, in the middle of the year, I found myself stopping for a moment after reading a Lipman text. It occurred to me that, while his curriculum was helpful for guiding teachers, it was specific in the sense that it revolved around his novels. This contrasts traditional curriculum, which prescribes outcomes but leaves resources up to teacher discretion. I questioned whether it was contradictory to value students' perspectives but teach those perspectives through the specific program under Lipman's umbrella. My initial concern was that the way we were encouraged to teach curriculum was prescriptive and standardized and yet the philosophical curriculum was laden with the same problems. It seemed both limiting and authoritative but I wanted to learn more about the roots of Philosophy for children so I took the opportunity to travel to the place where much of the original debate and discussion around P4C happened. I registered for a Philosophy for children summer workshop in Mendham, New Jersey sponsored by the

IAPC or Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for children, working out of Montclair State University.

The Mendham Experience

I found out about the workshop while searching the internet and had no prior experience with Mendham, New Jersey or Montclair State University. I had pictured a conference with speakers presenting papers about P4C so imagine my surprise when I received an itinerary revealing a schedule with sessions allotted to learning about Pixie and Lisa, two of Lipman's philosophical novels (Lipman, 1981; 1983). I went with an open mind and was prepared to learn whatever I could about teaching P4C. The Pixie and Lisa sessions were opportunities for workshop participants to practice facilitating community of inquiry sessions with the P4C model. We had the opportunity to present a stimulus to the community of inquiry, which was composed of other participants, facilitate the community in generating questions about the stimulus and facilitate a discussion around one of the questions. The facilitator was encouraged to assist the community in naming philosophical moves such as asking for clarification, disagreeing with another participant, agreeing and adding an example, etcetera. I struggled with this because of the focus on Analytic Philosophy and felt it left out the imaginative, wondering and narrative piece of Philosophy. Participants were discouraged from sharing stories that were not directly to the point, which I found counterintuitive because of my personal experience with Philosophy in which I found myself able to understand phenomena better through my stories and those of others.

Despite this, I was drawn to the intellectual rigor of the Lipman philosophy and the idea that children are capable of philosophical thinking if given resources. I also learned about the history of the program, which made me even more excited about

teaching philosophically and its potential benefit. The program was so widely established and recognized internationally that training and workshops were readily available for teachers, schools and school boards. It was commended by UNESCO in 1998, listed as an "exemplary program" by the National Diffusion Network of the US Department of Education and validated twice by the Department's Program Effectiveness Panel (Gregory, 2008, p. 16). The International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC) has member organizations in over 60 nations and the IAPC provides curriculum in Philosophy for children, conducts intensive Philosophy for children seminars in Mendham, New Jersey, organizes Philosophy in schools projects as well as courses and other professional development opportunities at Montclair State University (p. 16). Professional support is available and explicitly encouraged for teachers, schools and boards of education wanting to implement Philosophy for children in their classrooms. The IAPC does not expect all teachers to participate and avoids pressuring teachers to do so, something with which I particularly agree because teachers need to take on responsibility for engaging in philosophical thought as they conduct the program as a means of modelling and growing in the area themselves (p. 51). In Mendham I became attached to the format of engaging in philosophical questions authentic to and created by students in the community of inquiry and sustaining philosophical dialogue about questions as a way of explicitly teaching reasonable, critical, creative and caring thinking.

Philosophy and Curriculum

I realized after my experience in Mendham that I would need to clarify my definition of Philosophy, especially since mine seemed to deviate slightly from that of others. In my experience, Philosophy had always been about enabling creative thinking

and using logic to understand life as much as it had been about pursuing knowledge. I wanted students to think critically, develop logical understanding, empathize with multiple perspectives, use imagination and creativity to discover meaning, sustain thinking and learn to dialogue effectively. I did not want Philosophy to mean teaching students the history of Philosophy, Socrates and Plato but instead about engaging students in the activity of Philosophy. I would teach philosophically rather than teach Philosophy, as the exercise of Philosophy would be most important in allowing students to deepen their understanding of concepts and questions. This could allow students to use Philosophy as "a personal rule of life", making it practically meaningful for them (Barber, 2005, p. 623). Lipman (1991) defines Philosophy for children as an "intervention that aims to get students to do Philosophy themselves" and differs from applied Philosophy because it involves an intervention by philosophers to clarify and resolve problems that challenge non-philosophers (p. 112). I decided to use the P4C program to inform my teaching as well as inspiration from theorists involved in Philosophy with children (Haynes, 2008; Haynes & Murris, 2012; Wartenberg, 2009). I clarified philosophical inquiry and determined that it would refer to the questioning and wondering process involved in thinking about subjects that interested students. It would provide a space for students to dialogue about questions, concerns and interests and where students could share meaning, listen to peers, raise questions that were of interest to them and know that they were being listened to in a secure environment (Haynes, 2008, p. 57). I defined philosophical activity as that which includes, but is not limited to, activities that foster reasonable, critical, creative and caring thinking in students by allowing them to question and analyze information and resources through dialogue with each other. It involves pedagogy that begins with questions the students have rather than

content the teacher presents. Philosophy instruction would involve discussion among students within a community of inquiry where students would have an opportunity to share and challenge each other's ideas and would allow students to be present in the implementation of curriculum and the way they chose to express knowledge. It would teach thinking skills and deepen them (Haynes, 2008, p. 1). Reflecting through Philosophy would allow a dimension of "serenity [and] calmness" (Barber, 2005, p. 623).

Despite the correlation I found between philosophical instruction and the Language Arts curriculum, I had not yet planned implementing and integrating them. I was not concerned about the minimum standard except for how it might get in the way of individuals achieving their maximum potential. I was not concerned about content but was concerned about situations when teaching content was incompatible with student interests, values and experiences to the extent that engagement was absent. I wanted to find an alternate way of integrating the neglected holistic curriculum objectives and do so in a meaningful way that helped students to understand context behind their learning. I had been sitting at my desk gazing at an hour-glass filled with blue sand. Seeing the shape, I pictured it rotated on its side and started to think of the figure eight pattern. The figure eight is recursive, looping back and forth continuously. Always circling, the point intersects twice along its path, revisiting the connection it has made before. Whether vertical or horizontal, the point leading the figure eight never follows a linear path, although the path it does follow is consistent in that it can always count on the intersection of the lines and its circular motion. When placed on its side the figure eight represents infinity.

"We ought to teach in a way that allows an infinite opportunity for depth much like the figure eight," I thought. "The current curriculum is taught in a lateral structure or perhaps a ladder integrating outcomes within units or themes of study instead of coming from the direction of students themselves. Students are expected to meet outcomes instead of engaging with them in depth and are assessed this way as well. Provincial assessments evaluate whether individuals know outcomes as a means of ensuring that, collectively, children on Prince Edward Island achieve a minimum standard. Unfortunately this minimum standard does not mean that students have opportunity to realize their own individual potential. Au (2009) highlights how high-stakes testing has the potential to lead teachers to narrow curriculum instruction to not only that which is on the test but the fragmented bits of knowledge that occur in questions (p. 298). This alone prevents students from enriching their learning and ability to take questions to a deeper level.

Much deeper understanding of content may become possible if we begin instruction from the point of a student's specific interest and then integrate curriculum in the form of the figure eight around the point of interest. As the teacher sees opportunity to incorporate curriculum expectations into student learning she can do so. The teacher must track curriculum throughout the year ensuring that outcomes are met instead of visiting each outcome once. The outcomes would instead loop around with more important outcomes being repeated. In this framework, curriculum would become tied into conversations of relevant topics and linked with broader issues and essential questions instead of being fragmented because issues and questions would derive from student interest. Students could then construct meaning in a way that would not be possible otherwise. Teaching across the curriculum laterally was problematic because

covering content might not have been necessary if learners could not deepen their understanding of the world by doing so (Bruner, 2009, p. 78). Content is the information students learn, which often corresponds with specific curriculum outcomes. "Content is not important for students if they cannot connect it with an authentic purpose for them or the world around them," I thought, "we are constantly trying to bring reason into our world as humans and should be encouraging students to discover this reason on their own" (p. 87, p. 89). Learning specific curriculum as needed and under the umbrella of broader contextual goals would allow students to learn authentically and meaningfully because it would be connected to larger ideas and points of interest. Students could also benefit from being exposed to ideas in different ways and at different times.

I thought about how we often teach content as a means of meeting outcomes so that students will achieve minimum standards. We teach as though we need them to be exposed to everything but by doing so we do not allow depth in learning. Individuals cannot realize the potential of their thought processes if content is given to them in a manner that does not require them to think. Allowing students to begin from a point of interest would remove the cap on their potential because they would then have the opportunity to extend their thoughts on the subject as deeply as desired. Once they feel they have exhausted the subject they have the freedom to move onto another interest. As students develop, grow and change we can hope that their interests will follow.

Students in my class progressed at different rates. Some were capable of deeper levels of thought and with current instructional practices the gap would continue to spread (Eisner, 2009) as they got older (p. 34). I thought of particular students in my class and the added challenge they required. I felt that our school system needed to be looking at individual potential as opposed to the minimum for the masses. The figure

eight approach to curriculum would allow breadth in a way that assessing outcomes for knowledge does not. While the curriculum requires that different genres and text types be covered, this can be done with a variety of subject matter assessed in multiple ways. Theoretically, a student could meet all Language Arts curriculum outcomes within the context of philosophical instruction while studying animals at the Humane Society. "Teachers," I thought, "are bound to the curriculum but are not bound by a particular framework or timeline in which to teach it. We can choose when and how we teach outcomes providing we cover them effectively." The circular effect of the figure eight is not bound by finality so there is no cap on how far a subject can be taken.

Chapter Two

The Reflective Research Process

Questions and Curiosity

Mendham happened in early August, 2011 and afterwards I found myself thinking about research questions I would ask in my thesis. Mendham had shaken me in a powerful way, leaving me with the realization of how important Philosophy was in my understanding of life and self. Questions that had seemed obvious before now seemed complex and inadequate. I wanted to make the experience right for my students and I knew the questions would be a large part of that. I knew there would be more than one way to address the problem I had identified but I thought incorporating philosophical activity into writing instruction would be a way to counter the negative impact of fragmented teaching and learning on student engagement and creativity. I wanted to explore what unique philosophical insights children might come to and whether incorporating Philosophy instruction into their writing would benefit their learning. I wanted to know whether philosophical activity and writing had reciprocal benefits on each other when integrated in the implementation of primary education curriculum. I paused as I wrote these questions down. I wanted to know whether philosophical activity could tap into the natural curiosity of children and engage them in writing due to the inherent authenticity of choices based on interest. I wondered if the narrative writing and dialogue they would engage in as a result of their philosophical interest would allow reflexivity and the synthesis of ideas and experiences with those of others. I wished to explore whether the reflection created through the combination of dialogue and writing would create a zone of proximal development within which students would deepen and extend their thinking. The zone of proximal development is the difference between a

student's actual independent developmental stage and their potential developmental stage, which can be reached in collaboration with more capable peers or with adult guidance (Vygotsky, 1978). I thought students might be able to support each other through discussion in the community of inquiry and help to advance each other's learning. I also wondered if students could advance their writing skills through listening to and reading their peers' writing. Students might be able to achieve more after first seeing it modelled by their peers. Could Philosophy engage students in writing and could that writing influence students to deepen and extend their thinking? I knew that research suggests we might foster questioning and critical thinking in children if we could preserve their natural sense of wonder (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1980, p. 31). My question was whether teaching writing philosophically could help students to acquire a balance of authentic engagement in writing on the one hand, and depth and understanding in their ability to critique and explore the world on the other.

Research and Writing: The Time Arrived

I spent the rest of the summer ordering children's books from Amazon and developing the program (Appendix D). Before long, I found my stomach whirling with excitement and nervousness about going back to school. My sixth year teaching could have been my first day! Experience never seemed to help the nerves that come with beginning a new year. I knew those nerves would disappear after ten minutes in the classroom and I would find myself back in my element. This year was special because it would be the year I conducted my research.

I woke up and arrived at school early as I always did on the first day. I had worked out that morning and felt ready. The students filed in excitedly and smiled, while catching up with friends they missed over the summer and those they saw daily. I was

teaching grade two at an elementary school in residential Charlottetown where the average socio-economic background of students in my class and the school in general was high compared to surrounding schools in the area. The school frequently had several students for whom English was an additional language, although this trend fluctuated. All students had English programming with Core French offered to those in grades four to six. Reasonably small, the school's population was approximately 225 students with typically one or two classes assigned per grade level. Many students were high achieving and successful academically but, as with most schools, a number of individuals were on Individualized Education Plans for academic and/or behavioural reasons as well as students whose programs were adapted or modified[3] to help them achieve academic success. The school culture was positive with a recent history focusing on writing and mathematics goals shifting more recently to a focus on technology goals. I had been teaching at the school for four years prior and was largely familiar with the culture because I had attended the school as a student myself. I was working with a highly supportive administration that believed in research that had potential to benefit students. Acquiring funding to implement novel projects of interest to relevant stake holders, including students, parents and staff was typically not an issue at the school.

My research would be conducted with members of my class. One hundred percent of my students, twenty-seven, elected to participate and since I taught writing, all second-grade students at the school were involved. I knew it would take time but I

[3] IEP, adapted and modified are distinct educational terms. An IEP is a legal document and separate program created for a student. A modified program means a student is placed in the grade and has a program based on the curriculum but has it modified so they can complete it successfully, i.e. they read different books, etcetera. An adapted program means the student is meeting curriculum outcomes at grade level but in a different way.

thought it would be beneficial to gather data on all of them to analyze the different ways they reacted to the research. I was also part of the study because I reflected on my own philosophical instruction experience and gathered data based on those reflections daily in a research journal. As part of the case study, I collected my own field texts so that I could later incorporate them into narratives.

I decided to use narratives I collected throughout the course of the study and narratives my students wrote to weave the case study of what my class and I experienced when incorporating philosophical activity into writing instruction. After reading on the subject, I defined narrative inquiry as studying activities involved in generating stories and life experiences, reporting on those activities and examining personal narrative (Schwandt, 2007, pp. 203-204). I decided to leave the "narrative" term open to include fictional stories and realistic stories based on personal experiences. I would analyse my own realistic narratives and my students' fictional, fantastic and realistic narratives. I based the decision to take an open approach to the "narrative" term on my students' writing experience and my teaching philosophy. I would prefer my students be engaged in the writing task rather than worry about the semantics of the genre. The day went well and I was excited to get back to school the next day and then the next. I wanted to begin teaching philosophically as soon as possible so that it would become part of the class routine so I decided to begin on the third day. I was happy with my decision to use narrative inquiry as methodology because the students offered incredible insight. It would be beneficial to have their views reflected in my findings. I wanted to think about narrative more so I would have a clear sense of how to structure my journal so, that night, I took out reflective writing I had completed previously on the subject.

Stories about Writing about Questions about Stories

I sat down to read the typed sheet filled with scratches, scrawls and changes. Amidst a sea of young minds the teacher stands balancing, interacting, influencing, shaping and identifying the complex interconnections among learners, among the students and herself, among students and other staff, among complex, constantly changing dynamics of the classroom. The answer to the question of "how to teach", the secret to how it is done, the solution per se, is a myth. It cannot possibly exist. One cannot have a single solution to constantly changing phenomena based on experience and background knowledge of multiple individuals, of individual students and teachers. Instead she uses experience and her ability to synthesize knowledge through reflection and observing her class. Perhaps she uses the experience of other days in the classroom, other aspects of her life and knowledge from her past she believes to be true. The teacher knows what she tries might not work. A solution that worked in the past may have a different result because the present situation cannot possibly be a precise mirror image of the past. No two classroom situations are identical so a mirror image cannot transpire. The teacher can, instead, use her story and experience to guide her in reacting to individual situations, while relying on lessons she has learned from her past. Only then can she begin to determine a practice of how to teach.

I put the sheets of paper down and thought about my choice of narrative inquiry as a methodology. "There cannot be a single answer of how to teach if a teacher's experience is constantly evolving and changing, dependent on the interconnection of a multitude of beings and the situations among those beings. Researchers cannot give an answer about how best to teach." I had been reading Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who articulate that the researcher, or teacher, can attempt to tell the story of teaching or

attempt to make meaning from the teaching experience (p. 81). Experience is not beneficial as a prescription to follow but as a story to learn from. We can then draw lessons from the stories to guide us in further experiences. When we read fairytales we do not learn how to trick evil step sisters or what paths to take in the woods but rather how to overcome odds and stay away from danger, lessons that can be applied to various situations. We can then use these lessons and experiences to inform our narratives as well. I smiled, thinking about how this recursive process had clarified for me when reading Bruner (2004). The narrative is then informed by experience and experience by the narrative (p. 692). The process offers opportunity for developing understanding for the teacher and the students (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 89). The more I had read Clandinin and Connelly the more I saw narrative as a tool for understanding because a writer, whether the student or the teacher, must go through the process of synthesizing her thoughts into a coherent narrative. Through the sophisticated thought processes that go into crafting a narrative, a teacher can document experiences that shed light on other experiences, backgrounds and other teachers' particular situations. Stories can help others make sense of situations and knowledge they know to be true providing practical assistance and guidance useful to all because it will be interpreted in the particular context meaningful to them. The teacher's narrative process and reflection will, of course, inform her own practice and be useful for future years in the classroom.

I flipped over my reflection and read what I had written about the student: the student interacts with material in the classroom as well. She takes in classroom information but not through a funnel because that would implicate the student as a vessel waiting to be filled. Instead information goes through filters and the student uses it to react to complex interconnections the student has used in the past and continues to use to

synthesize material. Like a filter, the student sifts through the information instead of taking it in whole and as is. The student's experience is dynamic and constantly changing, as is the filter, for the next time material is sifted through filtered holes things will be different, as will the interactions. The student can never learn in the exact same way because the evolving nature of experience will make situations slightly different. As for the teacher, there are no absolute answers for the student because "interpretations of events can always be otherwise" and there is an amount of "uncertainty about an event's meaning" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 31). Instead of answers lie possibilities, the possibility for imagination – imagination through narrative for the learner, the teacher and the teacher as the learner to make sense of the experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987, p. 4). Imagination allows for complexity and the potential for change. Rather than answers, it gives space for creativity and possibility for new insight that can contribute to others' experience and meaning-making. Imagining through narrative and narrating through one's imagination enables force exerted through the wheel, tweaking the wheel to move and learning to occur. It is the recursive synthesis back and forth that allows meaning and its fragments to clarify. The spokes are no longer fragments when they come together around the hub of meaning. Connections are made from revisiting a concept, thinking about a concept, writing about a concept and then thinking about it again. A connection encourages engagement, motivation, challenge and meaning synthesis. First, there must be space for this and there is no space within an answer.

I set the sheets down on the coffee table again and thought about what kind of space I would need to create in the classroom. I had come to think about narrative freedom a great deal. The space would have to provide room and freedom for the students and me to work together. It would enable us to interact and collaborate over

time (p. 20). Collaboration would leave room for multiple voices to be heard within the weave of stories we created together (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63). I realized I wanted my student's voices heard and for that to happen they would need to be given opportunity to speak (p. 75). I considered two conditions necessary for student voices. The first was security in the classroom to ensure that it was my students' voices being heard, not me speaking under the guise of student voices. I also wanted to ensure voices were not silenced when considering parts of student narratives to include and exclude (p. 147). I planned the research project to involve my students in exploring narrative, dialogue and writing as a means to experiment with questioning, processing and creating meaning. "People are a collection of lived stories," I remembered from Clandinin and Connelly, "so sharing those stories is an effective way to synthesize their experience" (p. 43).

Within the narrative inquiry process I would have opportunity to mirror my students' experience and come to make meaning of and better understand my own pedagogical framework from a reflective position. I would experience reflection through narrative. As a researcher and teacher, it was clear to me that I was not only working with my students but also myself (p. 61). Every teacher comes to the classroom from a particular position of experience and understanding so it was necessary to discover the history and story behind my position and reflect on how it could impact research within my narratives themselves (pp. 17, 46). Narrative inquiry enabled me to develop context for the origin of my study (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). Like my students in the community of inquiry, I tried to compare my narratives so I did not fall into a narrative relativism trap (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 85). I wanted to compare my narratives with student narratives to ensure I was being accurate and not pretending facts were accurate

simply because I had experienced them that way. Through dialogue and interview, I planned to ask my students questions about their narratives so I could understand their intention. I planned to construct a narrative based on a compilation of my narratives and my students'.

I determined that narrative inquiry would provide a means of expressing data and serve a practical purpose. I suspected that information, ideas and discoveries I had not anticipated would transpire in the case study and I wanted to document these for my future teaching and that of others. Narrative inquiry would allow me to communicate and document these discoveries in an authentically meaningful way. It would be an accessible way to explore data so others can relate to the data and make connections with their own experiences and possibilities for teaching. Also, I expected my audience to be education boards, schools and teachers so I wanted to write in a genre that would interest my intended audiences.

I addressed my philosophical activity programming with a combination of narrative inquiry and the case study approach. As I would later discover, outcomes in the case study would inform my teaching. Content would be dynamic because it would be student directed. Students would write about subjects that came from their interests, wondering and curiosity so the content would be fluid, flexible and susceptible to change. I learned later that the case study approach would be useful because it allowed me to collect detailed observations and notes about practices that did and did not work well for students. Noticing patterns within the group would be beneficial. Narrative inquiry would prove useful because authentic stories could be told including context so the audience could gain understanding from process, failures, mistakes and successes.

Later, as I progressed through the case study, I would modify future programming according to successes and failures experienced in the classroom.

I used my experience teaching primary Language Arts to design philosophical teaching practices that were developmentally appropriate for children. Students would be using notebooks to reflect on phenomena they found interesting, whether social, environmental, scientific or transcendental. I chose categories in an attempt to be as open as possible so that students could pursue interests in a variety of subjects. They would have opportunity to share reflections in a community of learners, gain insight from other students, address fallibility in their claims and address wonderings from informed perspectives. Students would be guided to interact with each other respectfully and considerately. The open nature of student-led subject matter would allow for inherent challenge and teaching writing skills. The case study approach would prove to be consistent with this because details were gathered to inform how specifics of Philosophy could be taught from day to day because programming was dependent on direction students took. Case study would prove to provide space for attention to detail and narrative inquiry would give context to individual situations arising with individual students and their relationship with each other. The case study of my classroom over the length of the research project provides the boundaries for detailed observation and data-gathering, while narrative enquiry provides the means to make sense of that data within a narrative context.

Little Voices, Large Thoughts and Reporting Them

After reflecting on narrative inquiry and the decisions I had made regarding my research methodology, I stood up and got ready to go to bed. I put my reflection sheets away with the notes I had made that night about narrative inquiry and case study. As the

month progressed I became more and more content with my decision to use narrative inquiry and case study because it seemed to align well with classroom happenings. I started to think of plans I had made for data collection and how I would do it effectively without missing an opportunity to record valuable information from students and collect wisdom they had. I decided to video tape three group lessons so the community of inquiry would be recorded at the beginning, middle and end of the study. I would use these lessons to identify patterns in the level of student engagement in discussion, the degree of student versus teacher participation in discussion, understanding of philosophical inquiry skills, level of writing engagement and writing skill level according to the 6 + 1 write traits (Culham, 2005). We had used this resource to collect data on writing achievement in our school previously. Student writing samples would be considered with the rubric. Through synthesizing and assessing growth in writing competence, I planned to look for correlations between student engagement in philosophical activity and writing competence.

The possibilities of collecting my students' thoughts excited me most. I planned to collect three rounds of reflection responses so that I could gain understanding from their perspectives (Appendix A). I would use my own research journal to monitor and identify patterns in challenges, successes, concerns and insight into teaching pedagogy. My plan was to record in the journal as a discipline, a plan I realized, writing daily for approximately thirty minutes about events experienced in the classroom.

I would also use a rubric to assess patterns and results from the rubric would inform the narrative explaining what happened so I would not be making generalized claims (Appendix C). I designed the rubric based on my research questions and goals. I wanted a mechanism to assess and adequately evaluate the teaching practice and

pedagogy. Theoretical sampling would be used to some extent because patterns in the data would inform my teaching and change some of my practices so I could get an accurate read of what would and would not work well in teaching children philosophically. The plan was to collect data between October and December of 2011. I wanted to introduce the program at the beginning of the school year and follow it long enough to gather data and observe changes present in student learning. My study would not be controlled but I thought the benefit from detail in my particular classroom context outweighed limitations of lacking a control group. My energy would be spent collecting detailed information on my students instead of managing the logistics and workload of a controlled study. A control group would not enable me to isolate the impact of my intervention given the small number of students, the wide variation among individual children and the subtle details in the interactions I intended to explore. A controlled study was neither feasible nor desirable. I knew the narrative would provide context and meaning that could be practically useful to students, to me and to other teachers in a deeper way than was possible in a controlled study.

I found myself reflecting in my classroom one day on the timeline I had developed. In July, I had developed the philosophical writing program to implement in September, 2011 and had my research proposal approved by my committee members. My research proposal had been submitted to the UPEI Research Ethics Board for ethics approval, I had attended the IAPC workshop and finished developing the philosophical writing program in August. In September I had submitted my research proposal to the Eastern School District for ethics approval and I started to implement the philosophical writing program without collecting data. I also introduced the program and my research plans to parents. In October I planned to obtain permission from participating parents

and students, begin recording observations and details in my reflection journal daily, videotape the community of inquiry lesson, collect writing samples from students, collect student input surveys, ask students questions regarding the surveys to ensure that I had interpreted the data accurately and assess student ability according to the rubric (Appendix C). I would repeat the tasks from October in November and December and in December I would also begin to analyze data. I knew data analysis would continue into January and then I would have the opportunity to begin writing my thesis. I was overwhelmed as I sat at my desk thinking about what had transpired as well as what I anticipated.

The Teacher and the Researcher: Conflicting Roles

I then started thinking about and recognizing potential ethical concerns. The power I had over students created immense potential for ethical conflict in conducting research with them. I thought about this often throughout the course of the study. I knew my students were considered vulnerable participants because I was their teacher as well as a researcher. It was obvious to me that my students' participation in the study would not affect them differently than would normally be the case but I wanted to think about this actively to ensure I was proceeding with caution. I did not want students adversely affected by their choice to participate or not so I was sure to let them know that they could discontinue with the study at any time. In one instance a student's parents agreed but the student did not want to participate. Eventually the student changed his mind because he wanted to be in the video but prior to that I was careful to make sure he was not penalized in any way. I was planning to use feedback as an assessment of my teaching and the study's effectiveness but not as a student assessment. I had committed to conduct the study within the guidelines of the Language Arts curriculum as well as

the Tri-Council Policy Statement so that I would not disadvantage student learning or safety (Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 1991, CIHR, NSERC & SSHRC, 2010). I was careful to remember this and referred to the documents throughout the study.

I had held a parent information session following parent-teacher interviews to let them know that students would have the option of engaging in an alternate activity when I gathered audio-visual data of classroom lessons and discussion in the community of inquiry. The room in the parent-teacher session was overflowing. I could feel heat coming from the number of bodies in the room in the first session. My mood was ecstatic because I knew it would be easier to explain the study in person and I feared a negative response that might come from the intimidating consent form required. I knew that it would be less intimidating for me to explain in person. The meeting was a wise decision, as parents felt comfortable asking questions and some were quick to share their excitement about the study. As I gazed around the room, while presenting, I saw many smiles and nods. There were fewer parents in the second session because there had been so many in the first but it did not stop several parents from lingering around my desk afterwards to discuss the study and their children enthusiastically. Some talked about their excitement about teachers engaging in research generally and others talked about natural inclinations their children had toward Philosophy that they had noticed. I held a session with students informing them as well. Their biggest excitement involved their pseudonyms in the study and being in the video but they were equally as supportive as their parents. They liked the idea of being given a different name. It was difficult to ascertain why but it may have been because of the secrecy and mystery of the experience. I informed students and parents at their respective sessions that students

could complete an alternate activity when I gathered written data from students about their experience and opinion of how they felt Philosophy informed their learning. The activity would relate to other content we were exploring in the classroom. After collecting data I planned to have further discussion with students and question them so I could accurately assess what they meant in their written feedback. I would preface this activity with a reminder that they were welcome to express their opinions freely. I planned for students to perform writing tasks in the classroom as they normally would but I would only use writing from students who agreed, in consultation with their parents, to be part of the study. In addition to the parent information night, students and parents were given information about what the study entailed and the opportunity to ask questions (Appendix B). I reminded students and parents that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I was well aware of the power in my position and the fact that I was responsible for students' grades and assessment. As a researcher and as their teacher I would be careful not to allow data or its absence to affect student grades in any way. I also planned to make a conscious effort to ensure all students felt comfortable and safe to express views accurately, whether positive or negative toward the study.

My class was an inclusive sample because everyone was invited to participate regardless of language, academic, physical and cognitive challenges. The study was limited to students in my class because those were the students I was teaching but all grade two students were in my writing class. I was confident I would and did not use misdirection at any time throughout the study but I knew I needed to stay aware of this. I had disclosed all relevant information to my participants in the information sessions before they consented to being part of the study and I planned to clarify things, as

needed, as I carried out the research. It was difficult to picture that far into the future but I thought about a culminating writing and research celebration, which would give the students an opportunity to present their work and me the chance to answer questions and reward them with pizza, fruit and cupcakes for their hard work. As it turned out, this opportunity proved to be a tremendous success with 96% participation from students, despite being held on a sunny June evening.

The next day I looked back at my questions and started to clarify them. Essentially I wanted to know whether teaching writing philosophically could help students be more engaged, improve their writing and think logically and deeply. I would come to realize that teaching students philosophically could help with all of the above if several criteria were met. Had I gone about the program blindly I might have assumed the program not to work and students not to be capable of the challenge I envisioned, challenge inspired through P4C, but fortunately I did not. Instead, I analysed every step and turn that we took with the program. It was this analysis that gave me clarity and helped me to see the small details that were and were not working. Seemingly small components of the program mattered significantly. It was the recursive process, the same process of reading, questioning, writing and reflection that I required of my students, that enabled me to make necessary changes and adaptations throughout the program that were required, as voiced by my students, which is evidence that we can learn in a recursive framework. I strived to include security, discipline and reflection in my classroom at all times but it seemed as though a particular type of security, discipline and reflection were required to enable depth in thinking and challenge to be realized. I may have been able to have either the program or the components in isolation in my classroom but it was their complement to each other that allowed students to be

successful. Students experienced success with picture books as stimuli, support in the community of inquiry, narrative as a mode of expression and an environment that prioritized listening, reflection, meditation, metacognition and a quiet, disciplined learning space. The story of our research findings follows.

Chapter Three

Engaging Discussion: Stimulus Decisions

Teacher/Research Divide: Picture Books and Novels

I sat at my desk at the end of the day and felt a line rip through my core, splitting me in two and piercing the chair as I rested. Placing my elbows on the desk, I could not help but feel like two separate people. One side represented the researcher and the other the teacher. Despite being embodied within one being, the roles did not seem to coincide. "How can I balance the writing program with the Philosophy program?" I thought as I sat there. "I will need to find balance." The day before we had moved on to study retell[4] so that I could start the next genre study, which meant we did not have as much time for Philosophy discussion. Today we barely addressed retell because we had spent time at the mat discussing *Kio and Gus* (Lipman, 1982). I closed my eyes and could picture the subjects dancing around in my head separately like tiny icons. Retell was one, P4C another and word work was off on its own. All of them floated in isolation, none of them linked to each other. I could not help but think of the contrast between this image and my vision of addressing curriculum in a way that allowed students to achieve outcomes deeply in a unified manner. The questions continued as I sat there. "Am I doing an adequate job of teaching the retell text type and what about word choice? Is it O.K. to integrate Philosophy within a subject? I want to teach my students well but how can I focus on teaching these text types while I focus on helping students think philosophically? How can I be fair to this program while being fair to my

[4] Retell is used as both a literal comprehension exercise in which students retell the events of a narrative as well as a student writing activity creating a memoir of meaningful experience. I teach retell at the beginning of the year so that students can draw on their experience to write effectively.

students?" I could not help but wonder if my writing program was compromised. I thought of last year and the year before, doing a mental inventory of what I had been able to accomplish. I felt torn because I could see benefits students were getting from the Philosophy program through their discussion and questioning exercises. They were starting to participate more and became more articulate and thoughtful with their responses to the questions. Yet we had been able to have more focused lessons on word choice and retell in previous years. I knew both were important but it seemed difficult to synchronize them. I thought about the Lipman theory with which I had become more familiar and how the novels were meant to focus on philosophical activity instead of the literary components so as not to distract students. "I get that," I thought. "It makes total sense to narrow the focus as much as possible to Philosophy because students will want to go to literary ideas naturally but it is making my job difficult."

As teachers we learn to link our material so we can cover as much as possible with students in a small amount of time. Accordingly, it would have been nice to be able to cover word choice using examples from *Kio and Gus* since we had spent a fair bit of time reading it. I could not do this, though, because the Lipman novel lacks good examples of word choice. "I know that I have ethical obligations to be the best teacher I can be," I thought, "research or no research" (Mason, 2002, p.41). It did not sit well with me that I was using philosophical novels for Philosophy while integrating separate material for teaching literature. The separation continued the curriculum fragmentation that I was trying to avoid. Maybe I could have improved the situation by integrating everything into a theme or essential question but that would have been difficult because I could not have anticipated the direction that the children chose from the novel. I looked over at the computer and thought of the journal I had been completing daily. "Thank

goodness I am keeping that journal," I thought, "so I have an opportunity to reflect on this and be sure I am getting at all of the outcomes in the curriculum (p. 43). At least I can make decisions with the well-being of my students in mind" (Rossman & Rallis, 2010, p. 380).

I looked at the *Kio and Gus* manual sitting on my desk and could not help smiling. I thought of the table we sat around in Mendham, New Jersey and all of the P4C colleagues I met at the P4C workshop. The picture on the cover seemed to date even my own school days and yet I felt a wave of loyalty wash over me as I brushed my fingers over the whale featured on the crushed texture of the cover. "I want this to work," I thought, as I remembered the community of inquiry activities we had engaged in around the table in Mendham, taking turns reading excerpts from the novel and firing up lengthy discussion after raising questions of our own. I had so much fun discussing those questions and yet, yesterday, the students did not even ask for *Kio and Gus* when we had spent so much time on retell. "I wonder why," I said out loud as I picked up the novel and started re-reading the first few pages. "It is difficult to follow," I admitted to myself taking a mental note of the different characters. "I need to get these characters and the story straight," I thought, "especially if I expect students to be able to follow along." I had more experience and, cognitively, was relatively further developed so I assumed that many students would find the text difficult if I did.

I started to write notes on the piece of paper beside me. Kio and Gus, short for Augusta, tell the story and at times Gus pretends to be Roger, Kio's cat. Kio's grandfather and grandmother are in the story as well as her grandfather's whale, Leviathan. Kio has a sister named Suki, a father named Lee and Gus has a horse named Tchaikovsky. "O.K.," I sighed, "that covers the characters in chapter one." I scribbled

themes as a heading on the piece of paper, underlining it for emphasis. I thought that making a list of themes might help to synthesize details in the novel. “What I love about Lipman’s novels,” I thought, “is that students can pick up on any number of themes because there is so much going on!” The trouble is there is so much going on that it is difficult to keep it all straight. Kio entertains many themes in the introduction and first chapter including the notion of whether a haunted house is scary, make-believe and wondering what it would be like to be something else, wondering what it would be like to understand everything, whether one must have a tail to be proud, having an event seem like it happened to someone else because it happened so long ago, whether bath water runs into the hole or out of the hole, thinking about everything in the world being made of water and whether there could be such a thing as a flying horse. I stopped writing knowing that it would be at least a month before we ever made it past the first chapter. I paused to smile knowing that the length of time it took meant we were covering a small amount of material in depth, honouring one of my goals. I turned to page two and read the end of the introduction again, the part that the students seemed to stick to,

> I’m going to tell how I play Roger, Kio’s cat, and how I make believe I’m a firefly or a mole or a bat. Have you ever wondered what it’s like to be a bat?
>
> I can’t help wondering what it must be like to be Leviathan. Or to be Kio’s grandfather.
>
> I even wonder if anyone has ever wondered what it would be like to understand everything. I know I wouldn’t like it. What would there be left to wonder about (Lipman, 1982)?

Wondering what it would be like to be something else resonated with students. I knew the students stuck to this question because the theme was repeated several times when students raised the philosophical questions and I sat thinking about this. Perhaps it was because they could relate to that and understand it. It was a safe choice to question because they could explore the imaginative component of wondering and discuss a concept they understood. I thought about how students had chosen that theme over several community of inquiry sessions and realized it was because they felt safe with it. First students had concentrated on what it would be like to be a donut. They then asked what it would be like to be a peacock followed by what it would be like to be a frog. When working with the novel we composed several lists of questions about what it would be like to be something else. They knew that thinking about what it would be like to be something else was a philosophical question and one they would feel comfortable discussing. They were not able to articulate this but I could tell from the confidence they demonstrated when beginning a question with "what would it be like to be a" and the uncertainty they demonstrated when they asked other types of questions. They may have become habituated or comfortable with this type of question because it is not as demanding as others. It is difficult to assert why students stayed with these questions, whether they had more confidence with habit than the new and unfamiliar or whether they had difficulty coming up with new questions. Either way they were gravitating toward experiences that felt secure to them. "Isn't it funny," I thought, "that while they are ensuring security in learning, I am floundering in insecurity about effective teaching."

I looked at the African dwarf frogs that Karen, the other teacher, brought into the classroom the night before. One swam around as the other remained still. They were

adorable and the students had loved them. “It would be cool to use frogs as a stimulus in the community of inquiry,” I thought. “Students might talk about what it would be like to be a frog, true to their recent theme, but it might help to engage them further. In fairness, students had limited experience with wondering questions and had not been exposed to many philosophical questions other than the ones about imagining what it would be like to be something else.”

The next day I found myself sitting on my spinning black chair close to several tiny bodies leaning forward with hands raised in the air, as I wrote the latest contribution on the bright red chart stand. “What makes frogs slimy?” asked a student.

“Oh, oh, I know, why do frogs have dots?” asked another.

“How high can frogs jump when they are out of water?” Ryan thought as he glanced over at the aquarium.

“How many rocks are in the aquarium?” a student asked with a grin.

“What type of question do you suppose this is?” I asked the group.

“I think it’s a mathematical question,” said Kyle, “because we could just count the number of rocks in the aquarium.” Thankful for spending time at the beginning on what constitutes a philosophical question, I was able to quickly move on to taking the next question, and then the next, and the next consisting of how long frogs can stay under water, if they can think when they swim, what it would be like to be the size of a frog, how frogs feel when they stay out of water, how many kinds of frogs there are and how big a frog’s tank should be to be comfortable. Already students had expanded their variety of questions and seemed engaged. I gave students opportunity to eliminate questions if they were scientific instead of philosophical and they were able to do this effectively. Limiting questions to philosophical questions was necessary at this stage

because students were already familiar with literary and scientific questions. I wanted them to concentrate on questions that they needed to discuss and think about to reach understanding rather than questions for which they could look up information.

I was fidgety and thoughtful, scrawling thoughts down on paper, as I sat at my desk later that day. "Clearly I need to do something to engage students and put my own professional insecurities at ease if I can change the atmosphere in the classroom this quickly with a mere stimulus change," I thought. I thought of the Wartenberg (2011) video that I had come across when researching P4C. Students had been sitting around the facilitator, eager to raise their hand and make assertions. They had even had the knowledge to disagree with one another and do so appropriately clarifying assenting and dissenting opinions. "Those students felt safe," I thought. Their security and comfort had not even been in question because they were using a picture book. Children feel safe with picture books because it relates to what they know. Children are familiar with picture books because many children are introduced to them at a young age and themes within picture books are easy for children to relate to. Picture books are accessible to children because they can connect with images before they can read the text. I remembered watching and being impressed with depth in the students' discussion as they went back and forth about whether or not the boy should have used the tree to the point that the tree was left as a stump (Silverstein, 1964; Wartenberg, 2011). I wanted my students to have a discussion like that and it seemed like they were getting close when they came up with questions about the frogs. "How am I going to go back to *Kio and Gus* after I have seen students so comfortable with the frogs?" I thought. I then felt my thoughts shifting selfishly to my comfort level. "It would be easier to teach word choice and retell using a picture book." I smiled feeling relief extend from my shoulders

at the thought. “If I could use a picture book as the stimulus we could have philosophical questions and discussion about the book in the community of inquiry and I could use examples from the book to teach literary components explicitly. Students would be familiar with the book already so I would save time and instruction would not be fragmented.”

“I’ll finish the month with Kio and Gus,” I thought, “so that I can fairly say I tried it” knowing full well by the slight twitch of my gut that a month was not a fair trial of the Lipman stimulus and something might be lost. Regardless, it was imperative to the success of the program that both my students and I felt secure in what we were exploring together so the decision felt right. I was not O.K. with the writing program suffering because I was researching something new and I knew how important it was for students to feel secure in learning. I was hopping with excitement at the thought of using picture books as the stimulus because I was ready for a change and the discussion from the children in the video had intrigued me because the students had seemed both competent and engaged (Wartenberg, 2011). A permanent smile had fixed itself on my face. Instantly, I stood up from my desk and grabbed my coat, anxious to run home and go through the books I had already ordered from Amazon that were waiting on my book shelf. “Starting in October,” I thought, “I will move on to *The Giving Tree*” (Silverstein, 1964).

Connecting with Picture Books

I was initially worried about my own security as a teacher and researcher because I did not feel I was doing justice to a solid writing program with good literary examples as well as depth in Philosophy because I was using separate resources. This fragmentation seemed contrary to good teaching. Each day, I felt I was either

abandoning aspects of my writing program or the Philosophy program because I did not have adequate time for either. I used picture books for literature examples and *Kio and Gus* for philosophical stimulus (Lipman, 1982). In hindsight I should have connected them to a theme but even that was difficult because one of the merits of Lipman novels are the range of themes in the text, enabling students to pick up on aspects of interest to them in their philosophical questioning. I have been able to teach more effectively when I feel confident and secure in my programming so I knew it was both ethically and psychologically necessary to find a way of synchronizing the two programs (Mason, 2002, p. 41). Ethically, I felt that it was only fair to conduct the study if I was giving my students more than they would have experienced without my research. I needed to feel secure in my teaching and not like I was struggling to cover everything. Psychologically I found it stressful trying to do all of the programs justice in an insufficient amount of time so I knew a change was needed. Conducting the program and reflecting afterwards inspired changes in both the program and data generation (p. 24, 45). This and the realization that security was an issue for my students made me confident in the collaborative decision to change the stimulus; a collaborative decision based on my students' interest and my own pedagogical needs. (Delandshere, 2007, p. 140).

Security seemed necessary to enable depth in philosophical thought, particularly in regard to stimuli meant to inspire philosophical questions in the community of inquiry. Students had been frozen in questions beginning with, "I wonder what it would be like to be a …" with the Lipman (1982) stimulus and could not seem to vary their questions until an alternate stimulus was introduced with the frogs. Coincidentally, Echeverria (n.d.) reports having students who wondered about being superman, wonder woman and so on after reading *Kio and Gus* (p. 76). Students had difficulty generating

philosophical questions after reading *Voices in the Park*, which had been more complex than other picture books we engaged (Browne, 1998). The picture book was told from different points of view and frames of reference so, although rich, it was difficult for students to engage with the complexities of the picture book and generate philosophical questions at the same time. I came to observe that students needed to feel comfortable with material in order to take risks with depth. Students were intrigued by the frogs so they were able to ask interesting questions about them like when they engaged with picture books. The frogs were also easy to observe and navigate, unlike *Voices in the Park* so students could ask questions without processing and synthesizing other information. When we experimented with the Lipman (1982) stimuli students were not comfortable enough to take risks generating depth in their questions.

Haynes and Murris (2012) started using picture books as a practical way to conduct Philosophy with children but realized later that picture books have additional philosophical potential in their nature (p. 55). One possible explanation is that words and images rely on each other to provoke additional questioning and give other opportunities for students to empathize with characters in the narrative (p. 78). Like the frogs, a picture book is more concrete than *Kio and Gus*, more vibrant, real and engaging. If a student sees a character crying in an illustration or with a hurt or angry look they may be able to empathize in a different way than if they had simply read about the hurt in the text. Images may also contain detail that text does not, which may cause children to ask questions. When we read *Courage* my students focused on the fact that the boy on the front cover of the book stood alone on the diving board (Waber, 2002). The image consisted of the diving board, the water and the boy. I had not given any thought to the boy being alone and had summed the sparseness of the illustration up to a minimalist

choice made by the illustrator. My students had a completely different take on the illustration and it was very important to them that he had no parents and family around. Without the image, the text would not have been as rich or meaningful for students. Fisher (1996) concurs, noting that well-integrated pictures add other dimensions of meaning to text because they demand alternative modes of interpretation and active construction of meaning (pp. 21-22). Meanings must necessarily be constructed in the mind of the reader because they are not given literally (p. 22). The importance and power of images versus words was illustrated by what happened when we explored *If* (Perry, 1995). The words "If mice were hair" appear on the page with the image of a young girl's head crawling with mice, creating a visceral response (pp. 3-4). Seeing the image of a girl with mice for hair provoked more feeling in students about what that would be like than reading it on the page. Similarly, the words "if music could be held" took on an entirely different meaning when students could see the image of colours and dynamic stars coming out of young hands (Perry, 1995, p. 13). Not only did the image help students question whether music could be held but whether their vision of music corresponded with the book's image of colours and stars (p. 14).

The juxtaposition of images and text in picture books can provoke greater depth of thought (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 84). Particular human perspectives are necessarily involved reading narratives because readers bring their own experience to fill in gaps between words and images while making judgements about moral, social and psychological dimensions of the story. While the traditional approach to Philosophy focuses on rationality, approaching it through art and literature suggests emotion and imagination play a part in philosophical meaning-making and can add another dimension (p. 85). It was not the history of Plato or Aristotle that drew me to Philosophy but

instead the way it helped me make sense of my own life and better it accordingly. This involved imagination in thinking about what is possible and emotion to empathize and sympathize with others. Rationality may be enough for mind puzzles and analytical rigor but it is not enough to make Philosophy useful, which is what is important about Philosophy for children. If we want Philosophy to help children with their lives and enable depth in their thinking then we must acknowledge depth in emotional and imaginative components of Philosophy.

Haynes and Murris (2012) argue that meaning-making using picture books as opposed to solely using them as resources for teaching literacy has the capacity to provoke deep philosophical responses and should be recognized for doing so (p. 102). In one community of inquiry discussion about *Don't Laugh at Me* (Seskin & Shamblin, 2002), Casey, one of my students, had tears in her eyes. It was not the story that provoked the tears but instead the philosophical discussion about the story and meaning behind why people treat others badly because they are perceived as different. Pictures in picture books have potential to provoke deeper levels of meaning-making because of interpretation required to understand what pictures are meant to express and display metaphorically (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 113). Teachers must trust that children are capable of this type of meaning-making so that we will have confidence to give them the time they need and take their views seriously, enabling their understanding to grow (p. 115).

Picture books can be used to develop critical response through philosophical discussion (Fisher, 1996, p. 20). They may contain messages and themes that entertain rather than liberate. They may deal with such things as stereotyping girls' roles or representing children in abusive situations such as kidnapping or abandonment but these

stories and narratives are opportunities for children to develop critical responses to both the issues and their representations through discussion (p. 20). Teachers do not have to take themes in stories at face value; critical discussion can be used as a model for children to stand or voice an opinion against something instead of being apathetic. Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest that picture books with exploratory open-ended dialogue work particularly well for philosophical inquiry, noting that it is necessary to model both the possibility for dissention and the dialogue itself (p. 109).

My student, Nadia, had often been uncomfortable with the structure of the community of inquiry. In many discussions Nadia had raised her hand with a huge smile on her face and asked a philosophical question. The questions had not been in response to the discussion but were instead relevant to the previous step in the community of inquiry where the group suggests philosophical questions and then votes on one they find interesting. Questions for clarification or regarding the discussion were more than welcome in the community of inquiry but that is not what Nadia was attempting to do. She would ask random questions about the book irrelevant to the discussion. She had not yet been able to differentiate between the different stages of the community of inquiry and what was important about the different stages despite the fact that we had discussed when we were moving on to the next step. Students constantly sought how to follow the community of inquiry correctly and occasionally were completely off the mark as in the case with Nadia. I found this difficult as the teacher and facilitator because I was attempting to model while allowing for student independence. It was difficult for the entire group to pick up on this process because it was foreign to what they had been exposed to previously. I experienced angst regarding the extent I should intervene in the process. I knew that when I chose picture books I was taking away student autonomy

because I was choosing them according to themes. In some instances I even chose specific themes because the classroom was experiencing issues with peer relationships and I thought philosophical discussion around the issues would be beneficial. At the same time, students were more engaged in picture books so it felt as though I was giving them autonomy in the process since picture book stimuli enabled them to reach greater depth. Haynes and Murris (2012) discuss the delicate balance that exists between giving power to students and pushing for philosophical depth (p. 58). If we teach students how to experience depth in thought they will gain confidence that gives them power – power to stand up for themselves in a rational manner, power to offer dissenting opinions and the power to be able to think and act as critical citizens.

In addition to enabling depth, the security of picture book stimulus contributed to student engagement. Students felt secure taking risks asking challenging questions and discussing them. I noticed increased student participation and they began to reference picture books, which they had not done with *Kio and Gus*. Students continued to discuss picture books and use them as examples months after we had studied them. It was evident that students were able to connect to picture books. Haynes and Murris (2012) work with books that are cognitively and emotionally engaging due to their aesthetic quality, which I concur is crucial for children to inspire depth in thinking. When students were responding to the Lipman (1982) novel they tried hard because they were eager to please. *Kio and Gus* was written for my students' developmental age but, whether it was because it became dated or did not contain content of interest to them, students did not engage with the novel as they did the picture books. This may have attributed to their willingness to ask similar philosophical questions because they felt secure that they were responding "correctly" when they were not sure of how to follow the novel. The variety

in philosophical questions asked after the picture book stimuli spoke to student interest in the subject because they were asking questions they found engaging instead of questions they thought were "right." After reading *Don't Laugh at Me* (Seskin & Shamblin, 2002), for example, students asked questions as diverse as what it would feel like to be called names, why people bully others, why bullies cannot manage to control themselves and what it would be like for your best friend to die, exemplifying a connection with the material and establishing that students were synthesizing themes from the book and integrating them into their own framework about bullying and relationships. Similarly, student questions about *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964) included why the boy would want to disturb the tree if he liked it when he was young and why the tree had let the boy cut him down.

Learners need motivation to look for meaning so it is important that the imagination is engaged, which can be done with picture book narratives (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 76). In the Mendham discussions I was engaged instantly because looking for meaning is inherently attractive to me. As we went through the process, this seemed to be true for some of my students but they needed to trust and learn the process first. Eventually all of my students may have been motivated solely by meaning but I found students' engagement more complex as they first learned the process.

The picture book stimulus I used that involved the largest imaginative component was the most engaging for students. They loved it and when asked which book they wanted to write couplet or lyric poetry about they always voted to use *If* (Perry, 1995). I thought about sitting on the small black stool as my students inched forward, eager to see every last detail. Their mouths formed circles and they gazed toward one another as I turned each page revealing another intricate image. Students

demonstrated their engagement within their eager body language as well as in their verbal responses. Every page had a reaction. They loved it. The book was exciting to teach because of its vivid imagery and shocking text. While the vivid picture of the young girl with hair made of mice was enough to send shivers down my spine, my students were intrigued. They sat up tall at the listening area and asked to see pictures if I had neglected to turn the page in their direction. We reviewed the book a second time before coming up with philosophical questions in the community of inquiry and students were actively engaged with eyes up at the book and attentive listening demonstrated through silence, interrupted only with sounds of disgust or surprise inspired by images. Students were keen to learn subjects of any kind in relation to *If* because they had a strong connection with the book. The book had the ability to change their facial expressions from scrunched up horror to wonder and awe in seconds.

The emotional responses elicited by the picture books contrasted sharply to narratives used for the sole purpose of teaching Philosophy, as the latter texts may lack emotion and do not have the same types of gaps between pictures and words that require imagination, which students seemed to readily respond to (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 101). Many of my primary students liked to use their imagination, especially when reality and fantasy converge, as they did with the *If* (Perry, 1995) stimulus.

Philosophy materials meant to teach Philosophy explicitly may do a better job of reaching and supporting teachers wanting to teach philosophical themes but ignoring the engagement piece is problematic. Students need to be engaged to learn and want to strive for more knowledge. By engagement I do not mean that students need to be wooed with movies and blasts of stimuli intended to capture their attention for short periods of time but instead by good literature that they can connect with while feeling

secure with their ability to manage it so they can then ask questions and go deeper with their thinking instead of exhausting their energy in the initial comprehension of the text. Other stimuli such as songs and movies can serve this purpose as well providing they allow for depth in thought and are not only engaging for their novelty. The songs and movies could be used to create the same kinds of emotional and imaginative dissonance created by the gaps between the text and the pictures. It is essential that children are engaged personally and emotionally for philosophical inquiry to be meaningful because inquiry necessarily draws from students' personal experiences (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 115). Students need to relate the stories and philosophical discussion they have about those stories to their lives and experiences in order to synthesize new learning with their previous understanding. They must draw from personal and emotional experience to introduce new content into their schema so it is necessary for them to be personally and emotionally engaged. This was evident when students were eager to tell stories that happened to them. When they connected with the material their hands waved eagerly in the air anxious to get a turn to relate their own personal experience to the story but when they were not engaged personally they did not have the same desire to make connections. The experience reinforces Bruner's (2003) idea that we make sense of our lives through narratives, an idea that I will highlight further in chapter five (p. 213). If students cannot connect with the initial text then they cannot be expected to connect in the community of inquiry because authenticity in the questioning process requires them to relate the text to their own experience and ask questions that are meaningful to them. Engagement in the initial stimulus is the foundation for the rest of the philosophical process.

Fisher (1996) argues that we can relate readily to stories because they can be considered metaphors for our lives and that the Lipman novels lack the literary merit to do so (pp. 18, 19). Our lives can be regarded as stories or narratives in which people become characters (p. 18). Literary interest is important because we look for our lives in stories. For example, I constantly compare and relate my life to what the characters have experienced when I read. I think of parallels in my life, what I want to be the same and what I want to be different. Fisher's (1996) findings also correspond with my research in that teachers felt Lipman's novels lacked the literary merit necessary to sustain student interest, as I had (p. 19). It is unfortunate because they provide ideal starting points for philosophical discussion but literary quality is necessary to carry students through (p. 19). *Kio and Gus* (Lipman, 1982) has so many ideas and themes interacting that it becomes difficult for the reader to follow and relate to the story. It lacks plot lines to keep the reader turning the page to get to the next part of the story. Energy is spent following the story rather than engaging with it. According to Fisher (1996), the most Lipman would consider his novels to be in terms of literary interest would be passable so we need to offer more to children in our classrooms to engage them (p. 19). They also lack qualities that are important to children's fiction included to motivate and nourish their imaginations (p. 19). The importance of the pictures integrated with the narrative story was clear to me, as I became engaged in the picture book stimuli more quickly than I did with the Lipman novels. I am aware that this may have impacted my students' experience, which I made every attempt to avoid, but it was my natural reaction. Bobro (2004) admits to using folktales because he finds them more interesting (p. 86). In other aspects of my teaching I am aware that content must engage me in some capacity if I

have any hope of it engaging my students. It only makes sense that I would carry this wisdom into deciding on the best stimulus to use for philosophical teaching.

Picture books offer security at the grade two level because they are accessible to everyone in the class. At Mendham we took turns reading through philosophical novels. This process was engaging because we had to follow along and relatively safe because we had the right to pass but I knew I would never use this method in a grade two classroom. Students at this level are too young and fragile as readers to put in the position of reading an unfamiliar text in front of an entire class without practice and I would never do anything to compromise the growing confidence of a young reader. Instead, I read the novels aloud but because there were no pictures, and the fact that I was the one reading, students were involved in the process through listening only. Alternatively, picture books offer all students a window to be engaged regardless of their literacy level because, providing they can see, they are able to look at the pictures and synthesize them with their own experiences making meaning of them. Picture books typically contain fewer words and text on a page due to the inclusion of the picture so students are more likely to be able to read the words that are there and text is often larger making the picture book more accessible to the entire class. While some students may have been developmentally ready to connect to and feel secure with the philosophical novels, the picture books provided a way for everyone to access the material.

I consider it important to make students feel secure in the beginning because they will be experiencing something new. The environment for the stimulus must be secure as well as the stimulus itself. Haynes and Murris (2011) clarify that participant insight should not be accepted uncritically and that the community of inquiry should treat some contributions as incorrect, invalid or irrelevant (pp. 295-296). I did not facilitate the

community of inquiry sessions in this manner at the beginning, believing that it was more important for students to feel secure in participating before challenging them in front of the large group. If a student had said something disrespectful or offensive, I would have challenged this behavior but I felt that it was more important to establish an atmosphere of trust in which students felt comfortable communicating their thoughts without feeling judged or wrong. Students, such as Erin and Nadia, were often confused in their responses in the beginning, yet I could tell it took effort for them to gain confidence speaking in front of the group, as previously highlighted with Nadia's confusion about philosophical questions. I could have ruled out the contribution as irrelevant or incorrect but that would have been insensitive to the courage it took for them to contribute. Instead, I found it helpful to model appropriate examples of what a relevant response might look like and encouraged others to do the same. It took Nadia longer to catch on but Erin got to the point where she not only understood the practice and culture of the discussions but would follow intently and be able to synthesize and later bring up examples of others' responses in the discussion. The gentle introduction ensured all students felt comfortable participating.

I was not able to remain emotionless as students offered responses, as was suggested in Mendham, although I was able to remain neutral (IAPC Summer Residential Workshop, 2011). It was suggested that facilitators should not praise or smile at particular answers from students so that students would not seek approval from the teacher but instead rely on their contributions being valued in the community of inquiry. The reasoning behind this is that students already look to their teachers for approval because of the power dynamic so it is necessary to take that element away so they look to the group instead of evaluating claims based on what the teacher or

authority thinks. I was careful not to praise some contributions more than others but I smiled to encourage participation and affirm students, as I intuited they needed the affirmation. As students became more comfortable, I gradually began to model challenging responses as individual students were ready. I think teachers and facilitators should execute caution when challenging responses from young philosophers. Children should feel they are able to participate before being challenged about something they might not yet understand, considering they develop at different rates. They need to understand that it is their ideas that are being challenged and not them, which is a concept requiring explicit instruction and practice.

Picture books offer security in their playful and fantastical nature. Pretending and make believe are safe because students do not need to own and be accountable to ideas and thoughts. They can instead play with them and abandon them at will. Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest children feel safe with the playful juggling of ideas inspired by artwork even though it is intellectual in nature because fantasy and reality are blurred (pp. 120-121). Picture books often contain exaggerated images with distorted pictures, images and colours mixed with true to life images. This is not always the case but picture books often contain illustrations rather than photographs which will be at least slightly different than reality because of the human design and at least slightly true to reality because we need to be able to identify what they represent. Picture books can offer accessibility because they can connect with our everyday lives, while being separate from them. It was easy for children to discuss bullying in relation to themselves because, although the story or something like it could have happened to children in the class, it was not children in the class they were discussing. Instead it was fictional characters so it was safe to talk about an issue with the degree of distance characters

provided (Munson, 1995). At the same time, the story was close enough to home that children could connect with it. Stories may be intellectual constructs but they are also life-like and are embedded in actual human concerns (Fisher, 1996, p. 17). Lipman's narratives may be intellectual constructs and involve human concerns but the storyline is difficult to connect with and includes events that are more complicated and unlikely to happen in the way Lipman constructs them. Children could relate to the Munson (1995) book because characters in the story acted like them and the themes related to themes they might have experienced. *Kio and Gus* (1982) acts as more of a model to imitate than an imitation of the lives they already have so it is more difficult for students to relate to.

Students found it difficult to write after reading a narrative that they found complicated, something Erin voiced clearly in her reflection when she said "When we did the peacock one I did not have any idea what to write." The same student articulated that she found "the tree one easier." Like Fields (1998) I found that picture books can be studied in one session allowing students to interact with them immediately (p. 61). If they do not connect with an individual story they will soon have an opportunity to move on to a different story that engages them better. Fields (1998) suggests that using picture books may be beneficial to teachers with limited backgrounds in Philosophy (p. 61). Children will have the opportunity to philosophize with a fresh slate because of their teacher's lack of prior knowledge and the fact that they have not lost their sense of wonder and playfulness, as some adults have (p. 61). While I agree that ignorance can provide opportunity for new thought, it would be intimidating for a teacher to facilitate a philosophical discussion without having a background in Philosophy or curriculum to assist them. I know that I felt intimidated by times and I have an undergraduate degree in

Philosophy. This may be why philosophical novels can be beneficial. Philosophical novels do not come with a "fresh slate" because they are accompanied by a curriculum designed with philosophical content to assist teachers in guiding students through the novels (Lipman, 1982). While the curriculum supports teachers it guides them rather than leaving them on their own to let children initiate philosophical inquiry in the natural direction they take.

Philosophical Novel Regret

I am cognizant that I may have benefitted from a longer implementation of the philosophical novel before abandoning it for picture books. I only used the novel as a stimulus for one month and it was the first month of school. Students may have grown to be more comfortable with the novel and gained familiarity with the characters. Philosophy for children involves trust because it is slow burning in nature and requires teachers trust learners will gradually learn to think for themselves slowly in collaboration with others in their group (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 286). This is not the type of teaching pedagogy in which one is expected to see results immediately so changing the stimulus may be considered premature from a research perspective but it would have been ethically irresponsible to hold on to my research plan contrary to my professional judgement. I could have been more patient but I could not help but think that something might work better for my students and I felt the need to explore it. I did not want to lose students' interest from the beginning because I knew how difficult it would be to bring them back in. It would be easier to move a more experienced and capable group from their success with picture books to a novel.

As a result of my decision, I noticed the void of having a model for children to follow. The children in my class were not versed in conducting philosophical inquiry so

when they were beginning they seemed confused about what was going on. In other aspects of education we model what is expected of children clearly and I attempted to model effective inquiry as the facilitator without becoming excessively involved, yet students seemed uncomfortable due to their lack of familiarity. The modelling nature of Lipman's texts is a strength of the philosophical novels. Lipman saw the role of the philosophical novels as a spring for the community of inquiry and a model for philosophical thinking (De Marzio, 2011, p. 2). Picture books serve only as a spring and not a model. This is significant because the modelling responsibility falls on the teacher, which is problematic if the teacher is inexperienced in facilitating Philosophy for children sessions. According to De Marzio (2011) Lipman's novels work well with the ancient tradition of reading a text and assimilating the text's manner of thinking in order for the reader to transform their own (pp. 3-4). The novels provide examples of inquiring children but students can draw from the expository parts of the novel and synthesize new ideas from the novel with their own experience, transforming their thinking and elevating their level of understanding. Lipman believes that educational resources should model thoughtful children if the educational aim is to produce thoughtful children and Haynes and Murris (2012) discuss how modelling in the community of inquiry is one of the largest benefits of the Philosophy for children program (p. 57). Lipman suggests that children may want to learn how to think philosophically but not know how to do it (Bosch, 1999, p. 2). The model is meant to show and explain and not tell how to do it (p. 2). Lipman's novels contain such things as innuendo, irony and ambiguity that may be lacking in most picture books (Fisher, 1996, p. 19). Their story form mixes philosophical puzzles with inquiring conversations instructing children in Philosophy (p. 19). The process of the novels is important to Lipman, as opposed to the content (Haynes &

Murris, 2012, p. 68). The text becomes an instrument for children to understand Philosophy because the story explains the content of the text and students can then reflect on the text accordingly as a means to lead toward reasonable thought (De Marzio, 2011, pp. 17-19). Students can engage with deep content because this is what the characters in the novel do. Students can read how the characters discuss and interact with puzzling questions and then attempt to do so in discussion with their peers. This makes sense because primary children respond well to modelling and often succeed when they know what is expected of them. I model writing frequently as a means of modelling either the genre we are working on or the craft.

De Marzio (2011) suggests the way the text serves as a model is particularly important because Lipman novels bring together expository and narrative text (p. 5). The novels manage to bring together rationality and creativity because rational expository thought comes out in dialogue among characters in the playful backdrop of a narrative story (p. 5). Students have the opportunity to learn philosophical ideas through characters in the story. While it may not have been appealing to my students, this concept was appealing to me as their teacher, as rational aspects of Philosophy may be most difficult to teach, especially for teachers who are unfamiliar with Philosophy. I cannot expect my students to learn this component on their own and Lipman materials offer an accessible way to instruct. It becomes a craft for Lipman to write novels with Philosophy and narrative as the organizing structure because of the necessary blend of narrative and expository form (p. 3). This form is necessary because otherwise the text would consist of all story and no Philosophy or all Philosophy and no story (p. 1). Trouble arises when the novels are not current and connectable enough to engage students. Students would need to be intrinsically engaged in the meaning-making

process from the beginning for the novels to work because students could then use them as a tool toward the meaning-making goal. My students had not yet reached this point and needed engagement from the stimulus itself so they could learn the process and then become engaged in meaning-making for its own sake.

The idea that students can take away aspects of the novel they find interesting is appealing when they are coming up with wondering questions but my students found it difficult to do this when they did not consider the novel to be appealing as a whole. This gives children a lot of power when coming up with the questions, as even the theme they choose is autonomous. When using picture books it is important that choices for picture books and consequently questions are not driven by the teacher's agenda (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 6). I admit that when I was using picture books I experienced the pull to drive the agenda when some students in my class were experiencing social issues. I deliberately chose books such as *Don't Laugh at Me*, *Enemy Pie* and *Have You Filled a Bucket Today* so that students would have the opportunity to consider bullying and social dynamics from different perspectives (Seskin & Shamblin, 2002, Munson, 2000 & McCloud, 2006). I wanted students to have the opportunity to discuss classroom dynamics we were experiencing in the community of inquiry so that they could gain understanding of the issues. I was worried about student learning in the class and I had an idea about the origin of many complaints. I was equally worried about students understanding individual difficulties of particular members of the class and being able to empathize with those people. My idea was to introduce stimuli into the community of inquiry that included moral education, empathy and bullying themes. I knew this would be beneficial for students to see ways they were harming others and for others to consider different perspectives. This decision was significant because it was the first

decision I made to directly influence the direction of the community of inquiry. I had become the puppeteer with control over the community of inquiry. The students kept their voices in terms of owning questions but I had guided the direction of the questions. As Bobro (2004) asserts, we must be careful with what and how we assert ourselves (p. 79). Admittedly I had chosen previous stimuli but it felt different when I had a direct agenda and I was not entirely comfortable with it. At the same time I knew I had the responsibility to keep my students safe so it was with this ethic that I decided to go ahead with choosing intentional stimuli. I was also choosing text with connection to the world in which the children were living, which is arguably as valid as expecting them to relate to Lipman's philosophical world (1982).

I wondered about the amount of direction a teacher should give in P4C. I did not agree with Wartenberg's (2009) lesson plans that support picture books he uses and recommends because teachers are instructed to go in prepared and questions come from the teacher, or more probably Wartenberg's book, and not from students. Shor and Freire (1987) discuss "freedom needing authority to become free" (p. 91). Liberties of students are difficult to reach absent authority or a teacher present to guide competing liberties. Competing liberties would make it difficult for a classroom to move forward if everyone was "freed" to act as they wished. This would make it impossible for anyone to have liberty because it would be squashed with the chaos of competing demands. Authority is needed to regulate competing liberties allowing freedom to ensue. My students had trouble feeling free in the classroom because classroom dynamics prevented them from being truly comfortable. My class relied on me to keep them safe so I felt as though it was my pedagogical duty to intervene if I could think of an educational way to help them interact with one another. Gaining an understanding of

child-centred versus child-led education is important. Courtenay-Hall helps to clarify this stating that, while child-centred education and child-led education are often used synonymously, they are in reality distinct (P. Courtenay-Hall, personal communication, 2011). Dewey's (1959) intention for child-centred education was for the child to be "the starting point, the center, and the end", which is different than the child being responsible for directing learning (p. 95). The studies are subservient to the child and the child's educational needs (p. 95). Courtenay-Hall clarifies that teachers, through their experience with the world, have insight to offer students and knowledge of ways to proceed with curriculum to best meet children's needs (P. Courtenay-Hall, personal communication, 2011). Although P4C operates under the umbrella of child-directed learning, especially in the area of developing inquiry questions, it would seem as though child-centred learning remains important in keeping students safe. Pushing for philosophical depth and giving power and trust to children is a delicate balance (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 58). We have to be cautious that, while we may choose picture books to assist with understanding in our classroom, we do not over assert ourselves and prepare questions designed for learners to arrive at correct answers (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 104). As teachers we need to be aware of having an agenda, which parts of that agenda will benefit children and which parts will stifle children.

I also wondered if my students were gaining rational understanding when working with picture books. Lipman suggests that chances of doing Philosophy are greatly reduced without a curriculum of some kind (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 58). This is possible because without a curriculum there is nothing to be accountable to and it is easy to get off track. I constantly felt as though I was straddling a line between a: being open to different interpretations of Philosophy allowing imagination, playfulness and

interest to lead the way, as in our discussions with *If* and b: progressing in discussion exercises so students could consider each other's views critically and begin to think critically and innovatively themselves (Perry, 1995). The idea that Philosophy curriculum can assist with progressive learning is echoed by Fields (1998) who looks at the difference between Philosophy specific and non-Philosophy specific materials, weighing the merits of both through an examination of different theories in the field (p. 56). Fields indicates that in a quantitative study only Philosophy specific materials showed significant results in improving student performance in areas such as science, mathematics, the transfer of learning tasks and reasoning (p. 56). Fields acknowledges that teachers must have a philosophical background when using picture books, noting that the Lipman novels include a curriculum for guidance (p. 61). I knew my students were progressing in their depth of thought because I could see many of them extend their thought processes in their writing. I also observed them connect one another's ideas in the community of inquiry and elaborate and extend their thinking on the philosophical questions. I saw this most clearly when watching the three videos at different research stages. My assessment indicated the majority of students improved their ability to participate independently and communicate with philosophical depth.

Moving Forward

The Lipman novels did not allow the necessary security for students to achieve the level of depth and engagement desired because students could not connect with them in a playful manner. Picture books did not allow the level of depth that appears to be possible with Philosophy for children, at least as indicated in Field's (1998) study. This left me the predicament of what stimuli I should use when conducting Philosophy sessions with children. Fields suggests beginning with picture books and then moving to

novels later (p. 67). This may work because if children become engaged in the process of Philosophy through using alternate materials they may like it enough to engage with novels and all they offer later. I enjoy conducting Philosophy in community of inquiry sessions enough that I am not bothered by the novels because I see their role as sparking the discussion and modelling ways the discussion can proceed. Given the current resources available this is the approach I would take because I feel that children need to feel safe in what they are learning as well as confident they can achieve expectations. Initially the novels did not provide that security for them. If they were to work up to novels and other creative stimuli progressively then children might become engaged in the process and use the novels as instruments.

Another possibility for teachers would be to learn Lipman's craft of meshing the expository and narrative forms to come up with a new set of novels and curricula (De Marzio, 2011, p. 3). New texts would need to embody a blend of rationality and creativity, just as the novels had (p. 9). De Marzio (2011) suggests higher order thinking involves constant interaction between rationality and creativity, which does not happen in most picture books and yet the novels did not engage students from the outset (p. 10). We need philosophical themes translated into ordinary language but with literary merit, pictures and engaging qualities so that they are practical for teachers to use when teaching other subject requirements and engaging for students as discussion spring boards. We need good modelling through the story's characters for helping students see possible ways of approaching philosophical inquiry. My future research in Philosophy for children would involve experimentation with writing new texts incorporating philosophical themes. Challenges would include requiring a more extensive philosophical background than an undergraduate degree to ensure I was acknowledging

appropriate breadth in the discipline of Philosophy and writing expertise to ensure I was writing fiction of sufficient literary merit. The texts would involve pictures to provide access to all students while providing alternative modes of meaning-making and synthesis. I feel that revamping the Philosophy for children stimuli would give new life to the program accessing and engaging more teachers and students. It would allow it to be practical for teachers and schools to integrate with other subject material, while maintaining the depth and integrity of the program. I realize that my findings are based on one study but experimenting with new curriculum and stimuli would be an area I would like to research in the future. It might be valuable to explore teaching children philosophically with a hybrid curriculum. My goal would be to include the following in curriculum for teaching Philosophy to children:

1. A creative and expository textual blend in which the expository element does not take away from the literary richness of the narrative.
2. Accessible philosophical themes such as ethics, logic, aesthetics, metaphysics and political theory according to developmentally appropriate student interest. For example, many of my grade two students have a strong interest in animals so a theme exploring animal ethics would be effective for a picture book narrative.
3. Literary merit to sustain student interest and serve as a model of literary and philosophical skills.
4. Pictures to enhance text and access students with reading difficulty.
5. Characters modelling inquiry in a way that is clearly followed and contributes to the narrative.

Chapter Four

Learning Collectively

Building Knowledge Together

"You get ideas from people,**"** (Gallant, K. [Keenan], personal communication, December, 2011).

"What children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense even more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85).

Elliot greeted me at the door, eager to show me the jersey he was wearing with his favorite baseball team's logo on the front of it. "Ms. Miles, do you like my shirt?" he asked.

"I love it Elliot," I was quick to reply, eager to encourage the enthusiasm with which Elliot greeted life every day.

Elliot asked, "Can I go on the announcements?"

"You can go up if all of your materials are ready," I responded, knowing Elliot would take time getting settled if I let him wait until he came back into the classroom. Elliot was struggling with writing and I was not surprised, as he was not focusing on writing for long enough to be able to progress. I knew Elliot well from teaching him Physical Education for the entire year prior to grade two so I was aware of his enthusiastic, yet feisty, personality. I was also privy to his tremendous potential so despite his best efforts he was not able to convince me that he was incapable of writing tasks in which we engaged. Elliot knew every avoidance behaviour possible. In fact, after returning from reading the announcements he began the process of searching for

his shoes. Despite managing to have his special book and pencil ready, he had not managed to put his indoor shoes on his feet.

"Ms. Miles, can I go look for my shoes?" Elliot asked. Many heads looked up from the writing task they had been focused on.

"Yes, Elliot," I replied cringing a bit inside because I knew that this would mean at least twenty minutes of time spent looking for his shoes instead of working on his writing. Lately it seemed as though every time I turned my head Elliot was sharpening his pencil, looking for his shoes, going to the bathroom or finding any excuse to avoid writing. We had seemed to be playing a game of cat and mouse during most writing sessions. Unfortunately, or fortunately, for Elliot, I had twenty-six other mice in the classroom so he had the advantage. Elliot went to look for his shoes and then came to sit with me at the table where I was able to conference with small groups of students. I helped Elliot with the writing assignment we had been working on about what it would be like to be a donut. Elliot did not voice disliking writing at the table but managed to drop his pencil three times and be up and down from his chair at least twice. I smiled at the thought of the community of inquiry session we had the day before on the subject of what it would be like to be a donut.

At first I had felt my heart drop a bit when students voted to discuss what it would be like to be a donut. I had been eagerly anticipating our first community of inquiry session and the students had come up with several exciting philosophical questions so I could not wait for them to vote on the question they would discuss. All I could think about was how exciting it was to be exploring Philosophy with this class. Then they decided to discuss what it would be like to be a donut! On the surface I had been smiling and encouraging but inside I had felt deeply rooted disappointment. I

lamented over the clever wondering questions they had generated in the initial exercise where they had wondered about complex subjects. Dara had asked about what moved wind if it was wind that caused the ripples in the water. In the spirit of authenticity, and of course following what was important and contextually meaningful to the students, we proceeded. They shocked me! Reflecting on what it would be like being a donut, the students generated arguments from two separate positions deciding on whether they would or would not like to be a donut with evidence to support their claims. Students who were against being a donut had said they would not want to be eaten, thrown in a garbage can or squished. Bria was concerned about how being a donut would affect her soccer game because, she said, "if I were the goalie the ball would go right through me!" I laughed as I thought about Bria's animated expression. Other students argued for being a donut and Mary Ann said that she would like being round because then she would be able to do summersaults and flips all of the time. I could not believe I had been so concerned about the question the students chose and here they were able to sustain their thinking for the course of thirty minutes about being a donut. In addition to that, students were able to build on each other's ideas establishing collective knowledge through meshing each other's ideas together even though the topic had seemed silly. Students had been able to listen to each other as well as agree and disagree with each other's ideas and contributions. At the same time, they could offer their own insights. While some students participated in the community of inquiry I knew that everyone was having the opportunity to add their own insight at some point because they were each involved in the individual writing task about what it would be like to be a donut. Learning was happening with students thinking reasonably and giving evidence for claims and in creative thinking and ingenuity as well. Students could not simply draw on conclusions

that had already been made because many of them had not considered merits and disadvantages of being a donut previously. Instead, students were forced to come up with their own ideas. I was impressed with the fact that students had been able to make assertions about whether questions were or were not philosophical questions before we had voted on them. They had been able to give evidence for their opinions and had thought of elements I had not considered. This process had created healthy disagreement in the class and modelled possibility for students to have different opinions about something as well as being able to support that opinion. I looked up from Elliot's paper as he finished writing the sentence we had collaborated on together and glanced at the class as they wrote. I was excited that they had been able to participate in a process that enabled them to develop thinking skills as individuals and as a group working together toward collective knowledge. At that moment, I felt a tug on my sleeve. Urging Elliot to continue on to the next sentence independently I turned around as Luke was jumping up and down saying he had to use the bathroom. It was not lost on me that he walked toward the door without the "convincing jumping" as soon as I had told him he could go. Then I looked toward Elliot and noticed that he was up out of his seat taking advantage of an opportunity. Nadia could not find her agenda and Elliot had considered it his mission to help her. Sighing, discretely and apologetically because it was so nice of him to help her, I went to try and draw Elliot back to the table.

Moving into October was exciting, as we were finally able to use picture books beginning with *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964) and *Don't Laugh at Me* (Seskin & Shamblin, 2002). Students were connecting to the picture books and I noticed from my research notes that Elliot had been producing more and more content. Nearing the end of October students had been constructing a story from a bully's perspective. Through this

activity I had hoped students would broaden their understanding of classroom dynamics and empathize with students who were having difficulty socializing with others. Students had read *Enemy Pie* (Munson, 2000) as well, where a student perceived to be an enemy turned out to be a friend, and students in the class had been building knowledge about what it might be like from a perceived bully's perspective. Students had voted to discuss why people bully others and it was evident that classroom relationships had been a problem. I was happy to have this problem at the forefront so we would have an opportunity to address it. My students had come up with many reasons that people might have for bullying including to get attention and make themselves look strong. They thought they might want to show off, be jealous or want retaliation or pay back. Students were able to think deeply into this issue and were able to suggest that it might be because the bully wants to make friends but does not know how, wants to get someone else in trouble because they are usually in trouble or might even have a toothache and feel out of control. It was interesting to see the students connect these ideas into their story about the bully and Elliot, in particular, loved writing the bully story.

"Ms. Miles, guess which page I am on in my bully story?" Elliot had asked that day.

"I don't know, Elliot, which page?"

"Seven," he would reply and the next day it would be nine or ten. As I tracked the progress through my journal it was clear that Elliot was becoming more engaged in writing since we had switched from the novels to the picture book stimulus and that he could connect easily with the stories and the writing tasks. Nothing, however, prepared

me for the day after when Elliot came bounding through the doors of the school and practically knocked three students over as he flew up the hallway.

"Ms. Miles, look!" Elliot said, madly waving what looked like a white flag. As I looked closer I could see that Elliot was waving several white pages stapled together and throughout the waving I could see that images had been coloured on each page and each page had writing on it.

"Wow, Elliot! What is that?" I asked.

"It's a book that I wrote, Ms. Miles! Can I read it to the class?"

Of course I said yes and that morning Elliot proceeded to read his book to the class. The book was all about the weather and Elliot beamed and smiled as he read the book out loud to the class, taking time to show each picture in detail. Proudly, without even being asked, Elliot added the book to the shelf so that his peers could choose to read it during silent reading. It seemed as though Elliot had developed confidence and become interested in writing within weeks of switching over to the picture books. There may have been other contributing factors, such as writing practice, experience gained and direct support from home, but the correlation was noteworthy. A nice surprise, as was Dara when she arrived the next day sporting her costume for Halloween. Students wore all sorts of different costumes but I will never forget Dara's. Her tiny legs poked out from a large black coat, which was completed with a bow tie. On top of her head was a hat and painted on her face was a moustache. I asked several students what they were but my jaw dropped as she replied that she was Shel Silverstein, the author of *The Giving Tree*. This was quite a contrast from the students not even asking for the *Kio and Gus* novel. After a busy day of treats and Spooktacular festivities I sat down at my desk to plan and smiled once again about the decision to change to the picture book stimuli.

Clearly the picture books engaged the students more and I was looking forward to how this would improve their learning.

After planning for the following day, I took out the pile of reflection booklets that students had completed over the course of that week. They had exceeded my expectations ten-fold. I told them they would be researchers and they took the assignment seriously, working quietly and giving as much detail as possible. One of the questions had been whether it was easier to have the opportunity to share philosophical ideas with their friends as a means of sorting through their thinking processes and, glancing through, I started to notice some interesting patterns.

First I read Brett's. "I find it easier with my friends because I get nervous in front of everyone in the class."

I then flipped to Kyle's. "With my friends because I find it a lot easier because it is easier to think."

"Yes. I think clearly when I talk," was written on Peter's. I smiled as I flipped Peter's booklet to the bottom of the pile and read Nadia's, which clearly stated she found it easier with her friends, as did Beatrice.

"Out loud because then everyone knows what you are thinking," Henry's said.

I couldn't help but chuckle a bit to myself as I read Elliot's because I could literally hear his voice come out of the page. "Easy because some of my friends are really smarter than me and I can just ask one of my friends like Ben, Ryan and Connor because they're right near me."

I thought about how interesting it was that students found communicating with their friends so helpful. Elliot recognized that his friends could help scaffold the process when he was unable to do it himself. Similarly, students found the process of speaking

with their friends helpful as opposed to speaking in front of the entire group because they could begin to iron out their ideas. The next day I was beginning a community of inquiry session. We had voted on the question for discussion and, eager to get started, I asked students what they thought. I was surprised when nobody raised their hand. I quickly remembered the reflections from the day before and realized I had not given them the opportunity to chat with their partner, as I usually did. I apologized to the students for forgetting and they entered into discussion with their neighbour. When I asked for contributions from the group the second time I received a different response from the first. Several students raised their hands and we then had the opportunity to enter into discussion together. As we discussed I took note of the way students listened to the person before, as they generated their contribution to the discussion. It was incredible how meaning could be synthesized in a group quickly, as opposed to independently. The discussion ended and I went back to my journal, careful to note the experience about forgetting to give students the opportunity to talk so that I would be sure to remember it the next time. Clearly the scaffold was important to them, as was the opportunity to learn from their peers.

Facilitating Community

The community includes security and support, enabling depth in student thought. The following support mechanisms in the community of inquiry make this possible, helping to scaffold[5] the process for students.

[5] Scaffolding is the process of adding supportive layers to help students learn building one step at a time. This helps students to gain confidence, while allowing them to advance to the next level as they are ready to do so. Peer support and facilitator support are forms of scaffolding for students.

1. It is important that the facilitator establish an authentic relationship with the students in the class (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 170).
2. The supportive and dialogical nature of the teaching environment, inspired by the support of the facilitator, ensures meaning-making is possible.
3. The community enables the synthesis and meshing of ideas and the zone of proximal development bringing students to the next level.

The facilitator has a difficult role that requires her to give students autonomy in pursuing the discussion, while maintaining enough support for students to feel comfortable doing so. The educator must be able to trust the philosophical process involving children and have courage to create a genuine philosophical space (p. 170). I found this to be simple in theory and difficult in practice. Trusting inquiring children to go about dialogue is a lovely vision but when you are in front of your own class you must be patient trusting in both them and the process. The learning process, although present, was slow. I noticed progress more readily watching video tapes of recorded lessons at monthly intervals than I did recording daily observations in my research journal. Patience and trust is important, for children must grow in dialogue with each other, as opposed to looking to the teacher to lead the way. When teachers share responsibility with the class for the form and content of inquiry it creates the best conditions for independent thinking and the group to regulate itself (p. 170). I helped to shape the form of the inquiry, attempting to be flexible, while students provided the content.

In the first round of reflection data, Molly suggested we use a ball for the speaker to hold so others would not talk out of turn. This was a great tool to enable independence among students, as they could pass the ball back and forth without

needing me to call on individuals with raised hands. I scribed students' thoughts and found it difficult to catch up to their ideas as they got going because they were able to organize so independently and efficiently. Ideas were flying through the room. Letting go may be scary for a teacher, as we must do it before we know students are capable. When we assist them we have no way of knowing what they are capable of. It is only possible for students to become authentic and responsible in class if we give them freedom to do so (p. 171). At times we may think it best to guide children's way or keep them safe, helping them to learn under our direction and mapping but this responsibility is what solidifies our position as gatekeepers of knowledge as adults (p. 172). I was repeatedly self-correcting as the facilitator, reminding myself to trust in the process and my students. It was difficult but crucial to remember that improvement is a slow process that takes time. Maintaining exclusive rights to knowledge fails to respect the unique perspective and knowledge that children carry because they have had different experiences than we, and consequently different insights to share with their community. For this to work it is important to listen to children and give them autonomy in the process.

One day in the community of inquiry I stepped in to make a point that I thought needed to be raised, while watching a hand belonging to one of my student's drop. I will never forget the sinking feeling I felt in the pit of my stomach that day. The eagerness had dissipated from her face and it had been evident that she was disappointed. It felt terrible. I had taken her contribution and could not have been more frustrated with myself. It is difficult to sit back hoping children will develop their thinking and yet it may be important to consider that the very process of developing their thinking as an independent group is a development of their thinking regardless of the direction they try

to take it. As pointed out by my committee member Pamela Courtenay-Hall, I found myself desperate to cling to any resemblance of Philosophy or rationality by times in students, which was difficult and unfair (Courtenay-Hall, personal communication, 2012). It was difficult because students were new to the process of conducting Philosophy sessions and unfair to put Philosophy and rationality on a pedestal, as if they were intrinsically good in and of themselves. I wanted my students to be autonomous thinkers, experiencing challenge in learning and this was exactly what they were learning to do at their own speed. Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest involving children in making decisions is usually possible and when decisions relate to them we should make every effort to do so (p. 181). Reflection data was helpful, as I was able to make changes according to students' comments with the talking ball. The fact that students voiced the importance of talking with their friends before contributing to the group was considered as well as a necessity for them to add depth to their thought processes and make contributing those thought processes to the larger group possible.

Security through Facilitation

The facilitator's role is more complex than allowing students autonomy in their thinking. An educator must be active in the inquiry as well. This is one way the facilitator can create a secure space for children to think and write philosophically. Davey (2005) discusses how the teacher's role is to assist students in exploring disagreement as well as to progress discussion (p. 27). As a co-inquirer, the teacher must model the procedures of an effective inquiry for students to be able to work together (p. 27). A teacher cannot simply set students free to explore inquiry and the process of discussion in whichever way it may lead but instead needs to be present in both the inquiry and the process so that alternatives are considered and divergent opinions

explored (p. 27). Students can then feel comfortable guided by the facilitator and the facilitator can ensure that the community is a safe place for a diverse group of people with diverse perspectives. It is a difficult role for the facilitator, since she must not only be present, but patient, supportive, trusting, flexible and committed to advancing discussion. This role requires practice. I felt myself flushing out this role throughout my study. Sometimes I would be hypersensitive to allowing students to guide the inquiry; then I would see students floundering for support with confused looks on their faces. I would attempt to step in and assist but, as in the incident above, I occasionally found myself over stepping and prematurely offering contributions that students might have come up with on their own if I had held back and given them more time. Like teaching, facilitating is an art that requires practice. This struggle may be better understood considering Jo's (2002) three teacher roles involving inquiry activities in a kindergarten classroom (p. 47). These roles are relevant to my grade two class because the process is the same with different levels of scaffolding. Jo asserts that teachers must be co-inquirers first, inquiry community leaders second and contribute a supporting role third (p. 47). If I had followed this advice and truly fulfilled my role as a co-inquirer first I might have been able to listen to my students better and noted the fact that they were beginning to come up with ideas on their own. If I had observed attentively I could have read them better. I am drawn to the model of being a co-inquirer first because teachers must respect and listen to other community members in an equitable manner.

The teacher's leading and supporting role in the community of inquiry includes creating a liberal space that allows ideas to be expressed freely. The space should allow all children to be comfortable speaking and discussing. Facilitators need to be objective and fair, helping community members to build knowledge communally and

collaboratively and they need to allow adequate time for thinking after questions are posed, a simple yet critical piece of advice (p. 47). While the criteria seem simple, I reflected on my role regularly throughout the study. Theoretical or not, they are still great goals and still difficult to implement in practice. When I was concentrating on creating a space where all students, particularly struggling students, felt comfortable participating and contributing I was less concerned with addressing alternative view points and making sure divergent opinions were being addressed because I was concerned with students feeling safe to contribute their ideas. While including alternative points of view is important and indeed part of creating a secure environment, I wanted students to first feel comfortable voicing their opinions without them being criticized. I wanted students to learn about critique slowly so they could become comfortable with the fact that having their ideas criticized is different than being criticized personally. Alternatively, when I was focused on children building communal knowledge I was eager to pair them and allow children to share ideas and build them as their own, as opposed to worrying about whether all of the children were participating in contributing to the discussion. At one point, for example, many students were struggling with writing independent wondering questions of their own. I paired them to work with a partner and they could write down wondering questions that appealed to them from their partner's special book. This proved to be useful for students and, looking around the classroom, I could visibly see student interest and engagement in the activity as students worked quickly scrambling to copy down their neighbour's ideas before time ran out. It is important to allow time after questions are posed and we must be sensitive to times when students seem confused and frustrated so we can be ready to give them enough support to bridge the gap causing them difficulty.

Teachers should be committed to these goals in order for the community of inquiry to work but do not need to feel responsible for advancing all of them at the same time. I think of it as a dance between them weaving in and out repeating a combination when it fits as opposed to trying to master all of the intricate steps at the same time. The facilitator's role must be flexible, allowing student questions to drive the community of inquiry and facilitate surroundings so children have the capacity to grow their philosophical understanding (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980, p. 83). The facilitator is responsible for creating a space where students feel comfortable and supported in their learning, whether through direct assistance or by allowing independence. Only then can students begin to take risks in their learning and feel safe doing so. I needed to negotiate this space carefully, balancing times when I needed to support students, like when they needed to expand the variety of philosophical questions, and times when I needed to let the community grow independently, such as when I interjected and pre-empted a student's idea.

Inclusive Environment

An open space in which all children felt comfortable contributing did not ensure comments rose above relativism, meaning any opinion or suggestion could go forth regardless of its merit or relevance. This is a concept I struggled with during my training at Mendham, as one individual was indirectly criticized for going off on tangents and occasionally missed the mark about what we were discussing. I felt that if participants could take something from her story or experience to gain insight on what we discussed, they might have found it valuable to the discussion. We need to encourage different forms of expression and relevance to be heard because we respond to different forms of discussion in different ways. One person may prefer analytical points with a strong

supporting premise behind them, while another person may form conceptual clarity from a narrative of an experience. In the event of contradiction a philosophical discussion involving both may determine which takes precedence.

While it is necessary to have an open attitude toward what is encouraged in the community of inquiry, it is valuable to expose students to elements such as disagreement and skepticism because they might not otherwise know these things are acceptable as they may not have been in other school experiences. Philosophical dialogue must be authentic, meaning intrinsically relevant, so children can practise skepticism and develop independence of thought (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 170). The speculative experience of Philosophy must be given a place and be modelled so that students can understand what it is (p. 172). Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest that some practitioners consider uncertainty and doubt to be developmentally inappropriate for children and that it is up to adults to provide definitive answers to children as a means of security (pp. 173-174). They assert that this perspective associates cognitive doubt with emotional insecurity, which is problematic because curiosity and wonder depend on doubt (p. 174). My experiences suggested to me that security could be better generated by allowing an initial space of openness in which individuals feel comfortable contributing to the group as opposed to giving answers and squashing doubt. We can then slowly model skepticism and doubt as individuals develop enough confidence to handle it, while being careful not to privilege particular forms of discourse over others. We must be careful not to celebrate analytical games over narrative experience consistent with the feminist critique of rationality that argues against privileging rational discourse over emotional and imaginative dimensions of human experience (p. 173). Being open to different modes of discourse and contribution does not lead to an attitude of “anything goes” but

rather creates a welcoming environment where everyone should feel comfortable contributing. I tried to encourage different modes of discourse and contribution in my class so both narrative experience and analytical discourse would be granted status. This is essential for equalizing power relationships, as one need not necessarily "know the language of rationality" to have access to participation. It occurred to me in my training that the individual voicing from experience was a teacher, potentially not as versed in the language of rationality as others with doctoral experience in Philosophy. Yet she was the one with experience in the classroom and her contributions should have been valued in light of what she could offer that others who had not yet worked with children could not. I question whether critiques of her contributions were scaffolding growth or shutting her down.

An inclusive environment open to all contributions should not be confused with mandating harmony; once the freedom to voice a contribution puts it on the table, it becomes open to the insight and critique of others. Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest that teaching approaches that encourage criticality and creativity should cause controversy, alternatives and disagreement because teaching thinking should be demanding in this way (p. 175). It is true that public insecurity can result in teaching from a type of script, as I allude to earlier, but if we reserve doubt and questioning for adults there is no room for children to have social and moral opinion and action, nor is there any room for them to develop mature ways of acknowledging and dealing with contradictory and conflicting doubts and questions (pp. 177-178). Encouraging controversy is not meant to be a teaching method for the sake of engagement but instead an opening for dissenting opinion necessary to teach the critical thinking necessary for students to be active citizens (p. 178). Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest that

uncertainty makes it possible to consider others' views because we are motivated to surpass what we already know (p. 182). Davey (2005) suggests P4C advocates argue that conflict is a means to understanding and drives the community of inquiry. Dialogue should focus on understanding gained from being involved in an inquiry and not on winning the argument as in the context of a debate (p. 21). Davey suggests students must learn inquiry rules in order to make the discussion a dialogue instead of a conversation (p. 28). These rules include self-correction and being able to adapt or retract an argument if it is not able to hold up against an opposing one, identifying premise weaknesses, generalization, reasoning fallacies and skills in finding definitions, classification and categorization (p. 27). While these skills may benefit students in organizing and developing rational thought, I would argue that they should not be employed to be significant in their own right. If a contribution from a community of inquiry member is fallacious to the point that discussion cannot be advanced further, another community member should call it but I have also been part of community of inquiry sessions where so much energy is spent on clarifications and definitions that the discussion never reaches the original point of inquiry. Emphasis should be on developing discussion and advancing toward clarity rather than obsessing over semantics.

Alternatively to Davey, I propose a balance between learning skills and an attitude of recognizing value in contributions that extend beyond naming rules. I should be able to make a contribution to the community of inquiry even if I cannot categorize, define it, etcetera because another member may find it useful and be able to pick up on it to extend the inquiry. I should not be able to criticize a contribution for the simple point of it breaking a rule of rationality. It can be criticized in terms of furthering or impeding

progressive discussion but not simply for the sake of criticism. If my rules are employed then students of any age can easily be part of philosophical inquiry and feel secure about it because, while learning the rational rules, they can contribute feeling safe that their contributions will not be shut down unnecessarily. It makes sense for children to become familiar with rational rules and discussion procedure so that they can learn to communicate logically and coherently but, like narrative, these rules should be used as tools for discussion and not be considered central to it. Rationality is not necessary for engaging in philosophical discussion in the beginning but can be learned to add depth and substance to it. This takes some potential pressure off the teacher, as they can then learn the rules of rationality with the students while celebrating and enjoying the imaginative and creative parts of Philosophy that allow for conceptual clarity through narrative, experience and occasionally general conversation. Jo (2002) advocates that the most powerful instrument in mastering rationality is philosophical dialogue and that the meaning of subjective experience is not as useful as the meaning of dialogue (p. 46). I would argue that both are important. We live our stories and we story our lives because "narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative" (Bruner, 2004, p. 692). Our subjective experiences are both useful and meaningful. My purpose in conducting Philosophy with children was for them to develop better understanding of their lives and to provide challenge in their schooling, not to turn them into mini Platos. Developing an understanding of their individual experience is useful and that is why I find Philosophy useful. If the instrument of rationality can be helpful in this pursuit then it is a bonus, but we must not lose sight of our goal in teaching children Philosophy in the first place. The goal of rationality alone turns Philosophy into either a game or secret weapon for standardized tests, neither of which are priorities for me as an educator. Rationality is a

means of testing and accepting or rejecting intuitive "common sense" and structuring collectively acceptable understandings. It does not replace or supplant intuition or experiential knowledge.

Gregory (2002) suggests that not only do we need children to reconstruct philosophical concepts, but also our notions of what Philosophy is and what it is for (p. 11). Perhaps the lack of "knowledge" in children can be beneficial in itself and indeed there might be some freedom in a lack of rational understanding as well, at least initially, in seeking conceptual clarity absent the rules. Adults may lack knowledge as well, giving them a different perspective into rationality and Philosophy but the difference with children is that they have not been as conditioned into what we think to be "true." It is up to us, as teachers, to negotiate between autonomy and protection but I think the protection we should be most concerned about is allowing contributions for the sake of clarity and life understanding, supported by rationality instead of playing second to it.

Meaning and Depth

The community of inquiry must be structured in a way that depth in thought can be nurtured because students are supported through the process. Some characteristics of the community of inquiry, such as sustaining thought on a single point or subject and learning to synthesize responses from multiple members, support the process of reasoning and assist dialogue (Haynes & Murris, p. 175). A specific time and space set aside with the stimulus and the discussion agenda outlined by the student's questions will help promote questioning and comfort set with the routine (p. 175). My students became familiar with the time frame and learned to stretch their discussion longer, sustaining it to fill the time. Students also learned to hold their attention for longer periods because they became familiar with their expectations. The specific time was

crucial in conducting Philosophy with my students and was one of the more effective aspects of the program. The specific daily time and space designed to explicitly teach and encourage students to think critically is absent in primary teaching methodologies with which I am familiar. Teachers may incorporate critical thinking into aspects of their programming but the community of inquiry time is designed for it. Every day we allocated a minimum of thirty minutes to continue with the community of inquiry discussion, read and ask questions about the stimulus or work on a writing activity that was inspired by the community discussion. In addition to the time and space, the agenda must be open for consultation and discussion to create support and protection for students (p. 182). Children are typically exposed to different values in a school because they interact with each other but this space provides a way in which children can explore those values in a supportive and measured environment (p. 182).

The oral nature of inquiry makes the community of inquiry accessible to everyone. Connor was a natural in community of inquiry discussions. He was able to synthesize ideas from multiple people and was a true active listener. He was keen to participate and had many insightful things to say. Connor shone in the community of inquiry despite the fact that he would be located in approximately the middle of the class in terms of his other literacy abilities. Erin had an opportunity to excel in the community of inquiry despite finding reading and writing difficult. Erin found it difficult to follow in the beginning but was able to bring up others' comments later in discussion and make insightful comments of her own. One of the things that surprised me the most was the extent success in the community of inquiry did not necessarily correlate with other areas of the classroom. I talked previously about normalising disagreement but steps must also be taken to take risks and develop playfulness in thinking (p. 175). Students must feel

secure taking risks if they are to be expected to do so. Students must be encouraged to search for meaning and "truth" based on arguments, examples and experience (p. 175). At this point assisting students in establishing depth becomes important. It is not enough to say that creating a secure environment leads to depth in thought, as we can presume that many, if not most, teachers have secure spaces for students to work and think. There must be an additional component of encouraging and teaching this depth and thought as well. Both are needed for students to develop. Students must be scaffolded to challenge their thinking but require a secure environment in the community of inquiry for this to be effective. Lipman knew children could engage in philosophical inquiry if they were given encouragement and assistance and if it suited their interests and abilities. The community of inquiry must be set up in such a way that children feel supported and are encouraged for their efforts (Davey, 2005, p. 18). Students must understand the importance of trust and respect in such an environment (p. 19). According to Davey characteristics of an inquiring community include listening to others, responding to ideas instead of the person, being open to alternatives, preparing to have one's ideas challenged and to challenge ideas, asking questions and making connections between ideas (p. 28).

Having the opportunity to communicate with each other and build knowledge is most important in the community of inquiry. Davey discusses how Philosophy for children advocates argue children learn more through the process of constructing knowledge than being taught information directly (p. 24). Philosophy in itself is an activity that one does with others (p. 24). Children have an opportunity to grow in understanding and meaning through dialoguing with others and weaving their knowledge together. Learning with others achieves better outcomes than inquiring alone

because learning is expanded when contributions are diverse (p. 26). Jo (2002) asserts that direct dialogue is important, for people weave the views of others into their own views when constructing meaning (pp. 45-46). He also suggests internalizing dialogue used in interaction with others leads to development of higher mental function (pp. 45-46). Dialogue students have with each other is important. Looking at videos from three different intervals of the study I could see progress. When I asked students to "turn and talk" initially some would right away but some were more reserved and would sit without saying anything. In the last video, students were all turning and talking and individual students were taking part in the different discussions growing more confident after having practiced dialoguing with each other. Listening in, I could hear students become more focused on the topic as they advanced their discussion skills and their coherent and reflective contributions to the group demonstrated that the talking had contributed to a higher mental function. Benefits of "turning and talking" were enhanced when students synthesized their partner's views as well. Jo defines a community as a group where personal opinions can be interchanged and found philosophical inquiry in a community to be useful in improving the construction of meaning in a quantitative study with kindergarten children in a middle class urban neighbourhood in Jinju, Korea (pp. 47-50). Haynes (2008) asserts that "providing an authentic, dynamically structured and supported context for talk, in which children's ideas are respected and taken seriously, is the key to building confidence and the power of expression" (p. 44). It is not enough to bring students together and have them talk. They need to learn how to dialogue with each other so they can then feed off of one another's ideas and build meaning accordingly.

Scaffolding through Sharing

Sharing student writing with each other proved to be important. Students loved sharing their writing. They were always given the option to share their writing, never forced, but hands would never be stretched as high as when I would ask if anyone was willing to share what they had written. In a letter to her parents for parent-teacher interviews Bria stated that she knows she writes with good voice because "all eyes are on her" as she reads her work to the class. Students were encouraged to write at home and, whenever they did, were automatically invited to share their work with the class. Elliot, Brett and Erin wrote text at home and were able to share for the class. Not only did students enjoy listening to each other and being able to read the writing they worked hard on but were able to identify features in their peers' writing that we focused on in class, which offered positive reinforcement for the student sharing. Students were able to listen to their peers and get ideas for content as well as see examples of good writing at their own level, encouraging them to raise their own standards. This activity proved to be supportive and engaging, evident in student participation with hands raised and the attention they paid to each other during sharing time. Students shared writing with a partner, which was most effective when they did not also share with the entire group. Students gave the activity more attention when one sharing activity or the other was chosen as opposed to both.

Some may question whether children have the developmental capacity for philosophical understanding but I think that Molly, one of my students, said it best at the beginning of a session at the coloured mat. When we finished data collection I had gathered my students and congratulated them, saying they had done well through the process of learning philosophically. I explained to them that many students do not have

the opportunity to experience Philosophy until they are in university and even then some students choose not to take Philosophy. As if on cue, Molly raised her hand and asked, "if Philosophy is just about thinking about things that you are interested in and then asking questions and wondering about them then can't anyone be a philosopher?" Scardamalia (2002) suggests children are capable of solving sophisticated problems at an early age and are able to support and dispel their own hypotheses through observations and community conversations when they are given the opportunity. I have witnessed children ask questions such as whether the earth moves fast or slow and engage in logical thought processes as a means of getting to the answer. They deduced, after researching the question together, that it depends on the latitude of the place in question and that the earth would rotate faster in a place close to the equator and more slowly in close proximity to the poles.

Perhaps the distinction necessary to highlight in teaching students to think philosophically may be that students will not be engaging in philosophical activity on their own but instead within a community of inquiry of their peers under the guidance of a teacher. Students are capable of more with the guidance and assistance of others. It was with research and discussion that students in the above example were able to reach the conclusion they did along with leading questions from me as their teacher. Bruner (1977) suggests that "the foundations of any subject may be taught to anybody at any age in some form" (p. 12). The zone of proximal development is critical in understanding children's education because it pushes them toward new learning instead of limiting them by teaching within the context of what they already know (p. 89). If a child's learning is tied closely to development then we need to set up the necessary scaffolding to help their development continue to grow so they do not stay stagnant at a

stage (pp. 84-85). The zone of proximal development involves learning that is still being developed (p. 86). The key to successful learning is finding successive mentors, coaches and teachers capable of engaging at the expanding limit of the zone of proximal development. It is this learning that the community of inquiry can help to support because the child can learn and listen to others while developing confidence to participate. Another step in the scaffolding process is that students have an opportunity to play with ideas in the community of inquiry so they will have an opportunity to experiment with real and fantastical imaginative ideas. Students distinguish between the real and fallible automatically as narratives, or the stories and experiences among individuals, are forced to interact with each other. Children have others to lean on to scaffold their development, worldly experience and their particular cultural backgrounds. Vygotsky (1978) asserts that a child will be able to do a task independently tomorrow that they can complete with assistance today (p. 87). I observed this take place in the community of inquiry. This transition did not always occur over the time frame of a day but it was observable. In the first video many students observed and listened, while in the second video, and even more so in the third, those same students demonstrated their confidence to participate. Talking with one another before contributing to the entire group was effective because students had an opportunity to experiment with their ideas and generate ideas with assistance before offering them independently. These aids provide children with the means through which to advance their development and gain unique and novel perspectives.

Learning through the intersection of one's own understanding with that of others is beneficial for development and understanding and processing meaning. To understand what something means requires an awareness of alternative meanings (Bruner, 1996, p.

13). My students could develop understanding of topics after learning what their peers thought about them. This happened both through their writing and discussion. A child is better able to understand and articulate her views on a subject after communicating with others possessing other views and thoughts on a subject (p. 56). Their writing improved after hearing their peers read writing on the same subject to the class. We did student readings aloud throughout the writing process as well as after the text had been completed for this purpose. When the narratives of students "mesh" "within a community of life stories" students have the opportunity to reflect on meaning and reality through writing narrative and can continuously assess and modify their understanding in relation to the understanding of others (Bruner, 2004, p. 699). The community of inquiry provides a means for this. Students had an opportunity to share their oral narratives and experiences within the community of inquiry and were able to write about them and read others' narratives. I frequently saw collaborative ideas in individual stories. One student raised the point that trees give us oxygen in the community of inquiry session on *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964). After the community of inquiry session several students included that premise in their own writing. After students shared with each other they would often include elements of each other's stories in their own writing. It was interesting when students wrote from the bully's perspective because similar themes came out in a multitude of perspectives in several different ways. Many students discussed reasons for bullying, problem solving, discussing bullying issues with people that they trusted and resolving the problem in the story. This imitation is important for learning because it gives children capability to go beyond what they could do independently and achieve more than they would otherwise have been able to achieve (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). Allowing children to come up with

their own views and the evidence to support them is more true to philosophical experience than giving them our own views (McCarty, 2006, p. XXI). McCarty (2009) argues that humans have an instinctive need to be heard, know they are being listened to and make connections (p. 34). If this is true then the conversation piece is crucial because we must set students up to be successful. As children learn with support in this type of community they can advance their development instead of grinding at a developmental level that has already been achieved (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 89). To do this, children need to work with their peers so they can internalize the process and carry it out on their own (p. 90).

If students are supported by the facilitator and the community through scaffolding and the zone of proximal development, it becomes possible for them to make and understand meaning adding depth to their thought processes. Jo (2002) asserts that we are able to construct meaning through interweaving and making connections in philosophical inquiry (p. 45). It is important for children to learn this authentically in a contextually meaningful way because it is the child that must internalize the process connecting past and present experience instead of receiving information from an adult (p. 45). When we participated in community of inquiry sessions students gradually and naturally came to learn how to participate and contribute. While I would model effective ways to contribute and highlight effective methods from other students I never delivered or transmitted this information to students because they were ready for it at different times and it would not have been meaningful to them until they were in the situation where it was relevant. We would engage in meta-discussions that drew attention to what was happening but this occurred naturally as children advanced to this stage. To construct meaning, children must be active in the process (p. 47). Students learning in

this way will be better prepared for challenges they face in the future because they will have acquired skills to take on novel situations instead of merely being instructed in what to do in a particular circumstance (Davey, 2005, p. 18). For instance, I hoped that providing children with opportunities to discuss classroom dynamics would give them the skills to problem solve and identify issues independently in the future. Moreover, I thought that taking an active role in discussion about bullying would help students understand issues in a different way than they would if they had instead been given strategies.

Students can learn more through knowledge construction than having knowledge taught explicitly because knowledge construction involves coming up with ideas and solutions and having to think about the process actively (p. 24). Children have responsibility to produce contributions of substance which motivates others to continue seeking meaning and contextual understanding (p. 20). Teaching in this way largely contradicts the way students interact and are taught in school. Students are typically given knowledge or guided to it instead of having it constructed from questions that they develop on their own. This is why it becomes so important to have the support of the facilitator and zone of proximal development in place (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 171). Children learn to try and conform to teachers' expectations, which I experienced particularly when we were completing inquiry sessions on *Kio and Gus* (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 171; Lipman, 1982). Students were limiting questions to what it would be like to be different things because they knew they were "safe" philosophical questions, which in turn made it difficult for them to stretch their contextual understanding beyond that framework.

Bruner (1996) suggests meaning is negotiable because it is situated in the culture that creates it (p. 3). If meaning is not consistent across cultures it is not possible for educators to teach the same content to everyone and perhaps raises the question whether meaning can be taught at all. One thing we can do is structure the community of inquiry in a way that students can raise questions and have an opportunity to sustain thought on those questions, creating a receptive environment to fostering contextual understanding. Freire (1987) advocates problem-posing education consisting of cognitive acts in which students have the opportunity to dialogue with each other in a community where each learns from the other (p. 67). When sustaining thought in the community of inquiry, students have the opportunity to engage in creating problems and solving them. When my students voted to discuss what it would be like to have toes for teeth my initial thought was that it would be silly and nonsensical – thoughts I obviously kept to myself. The more I look at the discussion, the more value I see in what students had to say. The students were able to sustain a conversation about toes being switched with teeth for thirty minutes. There are few people who I can picture being able to achieve this feat without deviating into another subject. Students were able to come up with creative thoughts about alternate possibilities that currently do not exist. Students came up with several problems throughout the course of the discussion such as how you would eat hard stuff and how your mouth would smell stinky no matter how often you brushed your teeth. The students thought that it would be hard to put socks on if one was a vampire and one's toenails would fall out if they were to eat meat. The students were able to build on each other's ideas through working together in the community of inquiry. They came up with creative ideas and identified novel problems. The imaginative component of the text and nature of the discussion made it feel like they

were playing so they felt secure, contributing at their own capacity. It was interesting that the silly nature of the discussion made it even more accessible to everyone. The students were able to mesh their ideas within the community of ideas and reflect on meaning and reality while assessing and modifying their understanding in relation to the understanding of others (Bruner, 2004, p. 699). Children were full of imagination in this discussion and eager to look for meaning or at least make sense of the fantastical idea of having toes for teeth. Lipman (1980) states that

> if we can somehow preserve [children's] natural sense of wonder, their readiness to look for meaning and their hunger to understand why things are the way they are, there might be some hope that at least this upcoming generation will not serve as models of unquestioning acceptance to their own children (Lipman, 1980, p. 31).

Gradually, and with the patience of both the community of inquiry and the facilitator, children can be supported and scaffolded to think about ideas with depth. This provides security so children feel comfortable exploring ideas together through sustained thought on subjects, which enables them to develop depth in their thinking.

Chapter Five

Narrative and Storied Play

"At school age play does not die away but permeates the attitude to reality," (Bruner, 1976, p. 554).

Stories

In November students had completed a second set of reflections and, although they may have completed them more quickly, they had once again taken the task seriously. I analysed them closely deciding where to go next. I had already chosen the text forms for the study, and in the beginning, had wanted to look at the concept of narrative loosely. I wanted students to engage in different writing genres so I thought it would be beneficial to refrain from limiting my definition of narrative for the study. I considered narrative to be any mode of expression, thinking that students could express themselves in art, story, poetry etcetera as a means of coming to understand content. I also considered the possibility that students would want to write in a hybrid of genres. I wanted to keep things open so that students would not feel limited but as I sat I thought about the student reflections and how they had gravitated toward two kinds of narrative. They liked narrative fiction and narratives that gave them an opportunity to tell about their lives.

I looked up at the question on Dianne's page that asked what subjects are easiest to write about and smiled as I read her answer. She said, "The easiest subject to write about is the bully story because you can make up what happens in your story." As I sifted through the pile of reflections I started to see similarities.

Lana's answer was "fantasy because I can make up stuff and making up stuff is so easy and that is why." Beatrice said that she liked to write about her family, what she

likes to do and making up stories. Molly wrote that she likes to take things that happen to her and make them into a story and Henry said that he finds realistic fiction to be the easiest because he writes realistic fiction books.

Mary Ann found making up stories to be easiest and Holly liked fantasy stories because "you can just put monsters in [them] or aliens or magic powers too." I was expecting to see simplistic answers about subjects that were easy to write about like hockey and Pokemon, and there was some of that, but there was also a huge pull toward the narrative genre itself. Like Bruner (2004), who found the form of narrative to be more important than content and to make the ordinary strange, many students gravitated to the narrative fiction genre (p. 696). This was interesting because we had started the year with retell and I knew that some students appreciated its scaffolding. Students had the opportunity to retell events from their lives and books they had read. Making up stories is actually more difficult for young children because they have not only to make up the story themselves but then organize and sequence it, a task already done for them when they are retelling a book or event. Victoria did say she liked writing about herself and Erin said she found the tree one easier, meaning the retell she had written about *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964). Most children, however, were not deterred by the greater difficulty of narrative fiction and truly seemed to like it best. Even Ben, who claimed to dislike writing, told me that he liked narrative fiction best and I could see evidence of this in his use of detail and voice in his stories. I frowned a bit with guilt because a resource for teaching poetry sat beside the reflections on my desk ready for planning the next month. I knew poetry could be narrative as well, and we would be exploring this type of poetry, but I could not help but wonder if the students would like poetry as much as writing fictional stories and stories about their lives.

"It is evident that students like writing stories best," I thought, "but I won't know how they respond philosophically to poetry until we try it." That factored into the decision to explore poetry along with my responsibility to teach students a variety of genres and text types. I also love poetry so I shifted my perspective to optimism and started to plan, wondering what types of interesting ideas students would come up with.

The next week I found myself in the middle of a shared/modelled writing lesson about couplet poetry. We reviewed the genre together and started pulling several couplets together. Because couplet poetry can be difficult for students, we started with isolated couplets and then I modelled a poem made up of several couplets in case students wanted to write an entire poem while working independently. I went back and forth with students adding a line and then having them turn and talk with each other hoping they would volunteer with the next line. The lesson progressed slowly but surely and most students were capable of following in the large group. However, when I gave students the chance to work on their own I found myself whirling around the classroom trying to help. Many students were stuck with blank pages in front of them. I tried to rescue the situation giving students the opportunity to read to their peers, hoping that it would generate an idea for someone else and gradually students developed confidence. Students could eventually develop couplets on their own and were particularly fond of writing couplets about *If* (Perry, 1995). Because I knew poetry might be difficult I thought it would be beneficial to bring back stimuli that students were familiar with as an idea generator. Another time I might use poetry as the stimulus itself. Although Elliot had a blank page at first, months later I would come to hear him boast about how good he was at "if" poetry. However, a few days later I found myself in a similar situation at the coloured mats. We were completing the beginning of a lyric poem inspired by *The*

Giving Tree and, while students seemed to be capable at the mat in the whole group setting, they found it difficult when they were sent to work on their own. Students were more worried about rhyming words than content and those were the students who had writing on the page! This experience was echoed the next week when we used a new stimulus entitled *Courage* (Waber, 2002). I made sure that we discussed the book with questions in the community of inquiry and then students came up with individual philosophical questions about courage on their own. As I circled around I noticed some students were breezing through the philosophical questions while others seemed stuck. I made a quick decision to use peer support and found myself smiling as students became animated. I told students they could share their philosophical questions with a partner and that they could write down ideas from their peers if they found them interesting. All around me students were eagerly writing ideas down and were quick to share their own thoughts as well.

Poetry instruction was becoming more successful but it became difficult again when students began to write poems based on their wondering questions. Many students were capable of coming up with a poem but some were not and only Dara was able to come up with a poem that included contextual depth. Dara entertained and played with the definition of courage in philosophical questions and a poem about a rat, cat, dog and bear. I will discuss this further in chapter six but essentially Dara questioned the value of courage in a situation that was ultimately hopeless. Holly's poem started to show glimmers of depth ending in "courage is being different… I think." I couldn't help but notice that most students had little pride in their courage poem because they struggled to finish the published copies for their portfolios. I also noticed several students had rushed their work. I tried to give some subtle encouragement to "add a bit more colour" but it

was obvious that students did not want to spend a lot of time on the courage poems. Many factors may have contributed to the difficulty of poetry paired with philosophical activity, including the fact that it was novel and that we engaged in it right before Christmas. Students may not have been ready to write poetry in the way I was instructing them and may have benefitted from writing poetically instead. The requirement for couplets may have added a layer of complexity that impeded my students' desires to express themselves. As I wrote in my reflection journal after school on one of the days that we had been working on the good copy, however, I could not help but think that the narrative fiction genre had a special pairing with philosophical activity that poetry did not. "Maybe with more experience," I thought.

That night I went for a run and tried to go through the particulars of narrative fiction, personal narratives and poetry in my head to figure out what it was about narrative fiction and personal narratives that paired so well with Philosophy for students. I knew that they liked to play with ideas and fantastical elements so perhaps the imaginative component of narrative fiction appealed to them. I then thought about the story they had written from the bully's perspective and how many of the students had loved writing that story. Some had included elements of truth in their stories and yet their characters were fictional so they were completely safe in exploring whatever content they wanted. I stopped for water and noticed it getting dark so I turned around and headed back. Security and imagination continued to whirl around in my mind in rhythm to my steps on the pavement. Was it possible that students liked playing with their ideas in an imaginative setting? I wondered if the imaginative setting allowed children to feel like they were playing with their ideas instead of working with them, enabling them to select ideas they wanted to carry forward from their individual stories.

It was not lost on me that students were eager to bring back the entirely imaginative ideas of the *If* (Perry, 1995) story whenever they possibly could.

"Almost there," I thought as I rounded the corner not a second too early because it was getting late and I needed to get to sleep. I opened the door and wrote three words on the first sticky note that I could find: security, imagination and play. I then scrawled narrative across the top and stuck the note to my desk. Rifling through my filing cabinet I searched for Robin's story, the narrative in which she had played with philosophical ideas. We had started that activity with philosophical questions as well. Finally I found it and read it, still thinking about the three words on the note. I had helped Robin to add in quotation marks guiding dialogue because students do not learn about the use of quotation marks explicitly until later grades.

The Art Thief

By Robin

"Class does anyone know what an art contest is? Yes, Tara?"

"It's to see whose picture is the best."

"Correct, well we're going to have that so go to your desk and I will give you a piece of paper and you can make a beautiful drawing. Wait, before I pass the paper are there any questions? Yes, Rolick?"

"Yes, if we lose will we have to get sent to jail?"

"Of course not."

When Tara was happily drawing a dog Desmen said, "Nice frog."

"It's a dog," said Tara.

"A frog, dog, what's the difference?" asked Desmen.

"Frogs can hop but dogs can't. Frogs live in water and dogs don't. That's the difference," said Tara.

"Aaaaaaah, hey but they run," argued Desmen.

"So what? Teacher! He called my dog a frog," cried Tara.

"Well maybe it could be a frog," said the teacher.

"Yeah, I guess it looks like a frog. Yeah, then whatever the judge thinks it is I can just say that is what it is. Then I would definitely win the art fair."

"You mean contest," said the teacher.

"Yeah contest," replied Tara.

So the next morning Tara went to ask her mom which was better, chocolate or vanilla. "Well it really depends on who, or what, person you are."

"Which one do you like better?" asked Tara.

"Vanilla," replied her mom.

"Why?" asked Tara.

"Because, to me, it tastes better," said her mom.

"But chocolate has more flavour," Tara challenged.

"Well not to me, everybody has their little tiny circles that are called taste buds and everyone has their own tasting senses. Now you go off to bed," said Tara's mom.

"If you say so," Tara sighed.

Tara had a hard time sleeping. She wondered if basketball was better than soccer and if soap was better than water but eventually she got to sleep but it was hard. When she woke up she found a present. "Could it really be Christmas?" she thought. She raced outside and started playing in the snow. "It's Christmas, it's Christmas," she yelled outside. "Get out and go on a very fun ride."

"Tara come," called her mom, "it's time to open presents."

"Ooh presents," said Tara.

When Tara opened her first present it was a puppy. "Aaaah, a puppy," she said. This had changed her life forever. That morning when she went to art class her picture was gone but she wasn't giving up that easily. So she went to tell the teacher and talked to everybody and the last person she talked to had it but he decided to give it back and they all lived happily ever after.

Clearly Robin was not entirely clear about what she thought about these ideas, as she more or less abandoned them to finish with an interlude about Christmas, yet she explored them. "Narratives do seem to allow children to play with ideas and yet it is safe," I thought. I never once heard Robin discuss these concepts in our community of inquiry discussions but she felt secure in entertaining them in her fiction. "No wonder students love writing fictional stories," I thought. "They're playing while learning about themselves."

The Narrative Pull

Narrative includes components that relate to philosophical activity. The imaginative and creative components of narrative fiction enable an appealing and inviting avenue for children to philosophize because they have an opportunity to play with ideas. Bruner (2008; 2003) asserts that children need not be taught how to tell or understand a story and that it is as human as our opposable thumb (p. 102, p. 222). I have had a different experience as a primary teacher. I found that we need to do significant teaching with some students about sequencing and understanding a story, particularly in terms of comprehension beyond literal understanding. I do, however, agree that children seem to gravitate toward narrative naturally. Like adults, they never

lose opportunity to tell a story about themselves (Bruner, 2003, p. 209). Haynes and Murris (2012) discuss merits of being able to think freely and creatively without theoretical limitations and constraints (p. 142). Narrative fiction enables us to construct novel worlds, which enables philosophical activity because we are able to explore new possibilities and situations (p. 142). Narrative enhances creative skills that may not be realized with the performance of thinking or logical inquiry itself. Narrative fiction gives us a medium for thinking about possibility because we need to do so in order to create a fictional story. We need to imagine alternate possibilities to be able to think about things in new ways. Creating these possibilities through narrative fiction enables us to do this. We can explore personal narratives creatively as well through reflection on our experiences and through internal dialogue about how we perceive our experiences and past events. Narrative gives us practice for engaging in effective and creative inquiry. My students could engage, inquire and think about bullies and bullying behaviour through writing about them in narrative fiction stories. They could practice thinking and inquiring about bullying in this safe and playful medium. This requires security and the ability to take children's creative views seriously because children's imaginative creations can evoke novel ideas, problems and solutions (p. 146).

I was caught with this insensitivity on several occasions in the community of inquiry because, as an adult, I was first viewing children's ideas as silly or nonsensical when, in reality, they were offering novel ideas. I managed to keep this judgement in check sitting back and taking in what the children had to say and, upon reflection, I could see value in what children were wise enough to value from the beginning. This happened when students brought up the discussion on advantages and disadvantages of being a donut as well as when they discussed problems associated with having toes for

teeth. We are constantly required to see merits and disadvantages of new ideas and innovations in our society so skills involving identifying novel problems with new ideas are valuable. Ideas may seem silly or playful but depth need not be restricted to seriousness or logical thinking skills, as learning can be beneficial when discussing content that is imaginary or playful. Narrative can be serious and about serious subject matter but can be playful as well. In play a child is free from situational constraints through activity in an imaginary situation (Bruner, 1976, p. 544). The imaginary situation enabled through creative writing allowed children to explore ideas freely.

Learning through Writing Play

Writing in the narrative genre gives students complete control because they have ownership and authority over everything in their stories. This can provide students with courage because they have autonomy and control over ideas they play with. Bruner (2006) suggests that because the child controls play it can give her courage to think, talk and be herself (p. 98). Children need to be reassured that it is acceptable to express subjective ideas and invent answers instead of finding them in a book (Bruner, 1971, p. 62). It is important for children to explore story-making so that they know they can have independent ideas and express them in the classroom (p. 62). According to Bruner (1996), school is supposed to have fewer consequences that threaten children's self esteem than the real world (p. 37). Narrative gives children a medium for enabling this confidence because students can try out the real world in their stories. They can also experiment with fantasies contradicting the real world. Both can be beneficial for engaging in philosophical activity because children can come to understand their lives better through personal narratives and the world better through fictional narratives and playing with what the world is not.

In some ways children are even more suited to narrative than adults because they can penetrate art forms in ways that adults cannot or typically do not, such as when children draw images out of scale (Bruner, 1971, p. 91). Children can offer unique perspectives to narrative because they have not yet been indoctrinated to the way stories usually are. Bruner (1996) asserts that tyrants put novelists in jail first because great stories reopen reality for questioning (p. 99). I know that reading my students' narratives about bullying helped me see classroom dynamics in a different light because I was able to see from their perspective, which is necessarily different from mine because they are situated in a classroom filled entirely with their peers. Many of my students viewed bullying in absolute terms such as puzzlement over why a child would do something hurtful when they know it is wrong.

Narrative forms a natural connection with Philosophy because reasoning is itself imaginative and metaphorical (Haynes & Murris, 2012, p. 148). When engaging in philosophical activity we make comparisons to make sense of things or explain an idea to someone else. We know about the world through connecting entities in it with one another because we make sense of things through their relationship with other things. We rely on imagining situations and comparisons because this is how we fathom new possibilities that could, should or might occur. Bruner highlights that children are not only problem solvers but problem creators seeking novel challenges (Bruner, 1987, p. 111). It does us well to make the familiar strange and cast new light on that which is familiar to us (Bruner, 2008, p. 102). In some cases it is more useful to recognize a problem than it is to solve it because we cannot solve something if we are not aware of it. We need to be aware of the things we do not know and both children and using writing to shake up the status quo can help with this.

Philosophical Questions and Explicit Connections

We cannot expect children to make connections between narrative and philosophical activity on their own. Bruner (1996) suggests that using narrative for meaning-making requires work reading, making and analysing (p. 41). It was evident that students were not making automatic connections between the community of inquiry discussions and narratives they were creating. Realizing this, I had students discuss philosophical questions about *Emily's Art* (Catalanotto, 2006) in the community of inquiry and then come up with independent philosophical questions before beginning their narrative. I thought this would help students engage in philosophical ideas in their writing because it had not been happening automatically. After students wrote the narratives, they shared them with the community of inquiry and the community made links between the text and philosophical questions to help point out connections to students explicitly. Some students made small or literal connections with questions and the text but others were able to engage in philosophical thought. Robin, for example, based her story on the concept of judgement and whether we can have authority to judge something such as art or even ice cream. Robin's character, Tara, is curious about the difference between being able to judge whether one thing is better than another or whether it is a matter of preference, which can be related to the idea of judging an art competition. With support and continued and explicit teaching about connections, narrative can be an effective tool for engaging in philosophical activity. The philosophical activity in discussions and questions helps to add a reasoning dimension, while narrative encourages imagination and humanizes the situation making it relevant.

Imagination

Imagination is intrinsic to teaching primary students writing, and perhaps writing at any level, because writing depends on it. Brynhildur (2002) explores how imagination can be associated with departure from routine as well as originality and invention (p. 34). Its link with mental representations and images can play a role in conceptualization and help children to imagine situations such as moral situations and the implications of their future actions before they occur (p. 34). Defined by Bruner (1976, p. 539) as play without action, imagination makes it easier for children to play with ideas because it is not regimented. Children do not need to follow rules when using their imagination. When we explored narrative I did not force the distinction between personal and fictional narratives for this reason. I wanted students to write through playing instead of for the genre. At times students' narratives meshed the genres, which had a negative effect on the meaning of the stories but I believed this to be secondary to the importance of keeping the playful writing atmosphere. Imagination is particularly important for children if they have not had experiences from the past to draw on. It enables them to see the world from the perspective of others, which is necessary when considering empathy education. I did see the benefit of this in my class when exploring moral education through Philosophy (p. 35). Students had opportunity to explore ethical content and interact and connect it with other parts of the world. They brought their past experiences to their writing so as they wrote about and processed new information they automatically assimilated it and measured it against experiences they knew, creating an inherently authentic educational experience. Students may not have had as much experience as adults have but they had at least some context to frame their understanding of the world. Our perceived reality can be questioned and demonstrated by writing and

reading examples of reality being shaken up. If life comes to imitate narrative and vice versa, then narrative can serve as a way of engaging philosophically with the world and grappling with the ideas that exist within it (Bruner, 2003, p. 59).

Exploring Ideas

Students felt more secure when they wrote a narrative from the perspective of a bully highlighting the security that narrative fiction provides over other types of writing. Students may not have felt as safe conversing about bullying without the playful context of narrative because they would have had to own their ideas before being given the opportunity to reason them out by playing with them. Some students may not have had a lot of experience with bullying so it is also necessary for them to use their imagination in narrative to gain empathy and understanding about what situations involving bullying might be like. Highlighted in the stimulus discussion, picture books gave students inspiration to discuss bullying themes. Narrative fiction then gave students the medium for that discussion. I wanted to be proactive, while fostering what Wilkes (1996) describes as an environment where each student's viewpoint would be validated (p. 44). After and throughout engaging in writing tasks students were then given the opportunity to take ownership of their ideas in the community of inquiry and discuss them. The goal was that students might challenge each other's ideas and begin to question some of their own (p. 44). Wilkes suggests morality education is not about teaching set values but instead setting up a space to think and talk about them (p. 45). Students helped to form their own understanding of their views in terms of bullying through talking about it with peers and coming up with reasons people might have for bullying behavior with each other as opposed to learning it as content. Students were able to interact with multiple conceptions of bullying through the imaginative narratives they were creating. They

were then able to make up their own minds about what they felt was important as opposed to accepting "received wisdom" from an adult. Challenging each other's conception helped students to assess and accept or reject them on the basis of the evidence. We continued to read other narratives as we worked on the bully perspective narratives so that students had multiple books and community of inquiry discussions to consider. Kristjanson (1999) suggests that, while stories are beneficial for modelling moral behavior, it is discussion with peers led by a teacher that can heighten awareness of moral issues for students. Teachers and students do not know enough about the messiness involved in human interaction so it makes little sense to teach it in a filtered way without attempting to gain as much insight as possible (Bruner, 2003, p. 44). Many students loved writing the narrative from the bully's perspective and Holly, in particular, included elements that hit close to her own experience. She could engage with that reality safely and respectfully because she linked realistic ideas with imaginative characters and events. She talked about how hurt she was when she was being bullied and about how she could not understand why people would be mean to others when it made them feel bad. Holly has a sweet and caring personality so her confusion about why being mean is possible was genuine.

The imaginative and creative expression possible with narrative for students seemed to be possible with art as well and in particular for some students. Luke has told me many times that he dislikes writing. When asked why, he has said that he "just doesn't like doing it" and that "it can be fun for others but not to me." Luke is a student who struggles with writing as well as reading and consistently needs assistance when engaged in the writing process. But when Luke picked up his pencil to draw his giving tree in the artistic portion of the assignment on *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964)

everything seemed to change. On days we worked on the art piece Luke was one of the first ones at his seat and on task. He was meticulous with his work, poring over every detail, a great contrast to his typical writing behaviour in which he would rush to complete a piece and claim that it was done. Luke took days to draw his art piece and then he took similar care in adding colour to his work. His writing afterwards was not lengthy but was thoughtful. The importance of incorporating art for students like Luke was starkly clear to me in this moment and yet I constantly felt as though there was not enough time. While Luke was at a stage where he found thinking and playing with ideas through writing difficult, he was able to do so through art instead. In fact, the art helped him to clarify his ideas to support him in writing about them. When students have opportunity to create and express they can then engage philosophically with ideas. I found it difficult to incorporate enough art into the process and, in some cases, was limited to illustrations in their narrative pieces. I think it was difficult because I was programming so many new things at once; in future I would love to add a greater artistic dimension.

Exploring Selves

In addition to allowing students to play with ideas in a secure way through imagination and creative expression, narrative allowed students to discover more about themselves in relation to the world. It gave them opportunity to explore content of their choice and allowed the content to connect and interact with other parts of the world. Self-making is how children establish their uniqueness and by differentiating themselves from others (Bruner, 2003, p. 211). It is also done by noticing similarities and allegiances with others. Students bring past experiences to writing narratives so they assimilate new information as they write about, process and measure it against

experiences they know. Students recast the past experiences they bring to the process in new imaginative contexts and understand that experience more deeply. Writing narrative and dialogue can be effective as a model and as a means for experimenting with situations and questions that could arise in life, giving them a safe venue to explore ways of dealing with situations from multiple angles and perspectives (p. 101). It can be effective in helping students develop themselves and become more equipped to reasonably guide their own learning process. It makes sense to give students autonomy in this process. Teachers and students can deal with narrative with comparable skill and openness for self-awareness (Bruner, 1996, p. 96). If students are given the means to explore themselves they will be better able to recognize their interests, strengths, weaknesses and motivations. The connection between narrative and self-making is perhaps best exemplified with the fact that people tell stories about themselves when they are asked what they are like (Bruner, 1994, p. 43). Analogies or examples are given to attest to particular attributes. It is fascinating how telling our stories can have such an impact on our perceptions of ourselves (Bruner, 2003, p. 213). Writing the narrative of my class has already had tremendous influence on my pedagogy as it has led me to implement several changes in my practice. Similarly, I saw Elliot become more aware of his own behaviour after writing his story about the bully even though he had written a fictional narrative. Remembering our experiences and turning them into stories should be meaningful for defining ourselves because we learn and develop understanding as we write (Bruner, 1994, p. 41).

Better understanding generated through writing has potential to influence students as more understanding people if our stories influence our selfhood in this way, if the self is truly a "product of our telling" (Bruner, 2003, p. 222). If we can synthesize

our ideas when we tell our stories we will come away with a better understanding of those ideas. I have found that I understand my own teaching pedagogy better after I have written or talked about it because I have had to filter through my ideas to tell a coherent story. Sharing their narratives with others takes children further in their use of narrative to develop their sense of selfhood. Working intelligence is better understood with knowledge of others (Bruner, 2003, p. 43). Students need to combine ideas from their own head with their partner's ideas and then negotiate through dialogue (Bruner, 2006, p. 98). Even if the others involved lack understanding, communal discussion will contribute toward greater intelligence because one will need to synthesize through his or her own understanding to make sense of the ideas that are irrelevant or ignorant. While I might find it frustrating engaging in discussion with people who lack knowledge about a subject, I can only understand it better after explaining it to them. Children can then take the meaning they have developed about their own relationship with the world and relate it to that of others. This negotiation can provide children with a model for how to proceed on their own through narrative scaffolding (p. 98). While we have the ability to assimilate narrative as we see fit, stories are better understood by understanding other ways they can be told (Bruner, 2003, p. 709; 2004, p. 55). We must locate our own stories within a larger social context (Bruner, 2003, p. 58). Students' stories are situated within a community of inquiry within which the interrelationships between the stories can be brought out and explored. Students could understand their own stories after hearing stories from their peers written about similar themes. After students read their poems about courage aloud to the class it was evident that they had developed ideas about how to make similar connections through narrative to their own lives. Seeing how others developed and understood meaning in relation to their narrative helped them do

the same. Understanding can be fostered through collaboration and discussion through narrative, about narrative and in narrative (Bruner, 2006, p. 167). We mesh our narratives with the community of narratives so that tellers and readers alike grasp the concepts and ideas within them by understanding them in the context of other stories (Bruner, 2004, p. 699).

Bruner (1996) suggests that culture is an interplay between an institutional understanding of the world and an understanding influenced by individuals' own histories (p. 14). The students in my classroom demonstrated this idea because they consistently told stories to illustrate learning that was happening in the institution of the classroom. We become the narratives we tell (Bruner, 2004, p. 694). While Bruner (1996) suggests stories can be judged on similarities or lifelikeness, I was less concerned with this than I was with how my students found narratives meaningful (p. 122). When exploring narratives from the bully's perspective it was important to me that they had an opportunity to investigate their own perspective of what it means to bully and then contrast it with their peers. I suppose that this is finding similarities but I think that what they found to be different was as valuable. The biggest problem with classroom dynamics that I found in my classroom was differences in understanding about what bullying behavior is and was. Bruner (1994) asserts that the drive to reduce cognitive dissonance is great when telling about one's own life and I think this holds true when telling fictional narratives based on experience (p. 47). The motivation for the bully narrative came from this idea. If students were writing from the perspective of the bully they would need to empathize with the bully through understanding motivations behind the bully's actions and also investigate similarities between them and the bully. It was interesting that in almost all cases students concluded their stories with resolutions

among the bully and other characters in the story. They wanted it to end well for everyone and resolve the issues.

Narrative helps us to structure and organize our human experience (Bruner, 2003, p. 59). When students engaged in writing from the bully's perspective they had an opportunity to reflect on their experience in relation to the world and their individual role. The narrative experience is twofold for students because they can grow to understand meaning, relationships and context through negotiating through characters in their stories. They can also come to understand themselves through their narrative lens. As I wrote narratives to synthesize my research I came to understand more about my pedagogy and personal teaching philosophies in the way I framed my narratives and what I chose to write about. I came to understand that reflection is imperative for my students and me to gain clarity, while maintaining my position that students require challenge. Students also discover more about themselves as they write. While students had opportunities to write nonfiction autobiographical memoirs as well as fictional narratives, it was the fiction narrative that appealed to them most. Perhaps it was because content could be fun, playful and imaginative or perhaps it was because they were secure allowing fiction to hide content they did not want to claim. Regardless, fictional narratives provided a necessary and safe medium to sort out philosophical understanding, including circumstances when content was sensitive in nature, as was the case when we discussed classroom dynamics.

Chapter Six

A Reflective Environment

As evident in the preceding chapters, engaging stimulus, effective community and narrative, specifically narrative fiction and personal narrative, were essential in enabling children to explore philosophical activity with depth. In addition to these components, students demonstrated a need for an effective working environment and time for reflection to facilitate the success of the components above. My students' needs, the environment and reflection time became priorities for me and we worked as a group explicitly on our classroom space. This chapter outlines the logistics and importance of maintaining an effective working environment and the connection of the environment with preceding chapters.

> "It is foolish to think that all noisy children prefer to live their lives in an agitated and disruptive state. Wanting to be quiet may need to be followed by being taught explicitly how to be quiet" (Haynes, 2008, pp. 80, 81).
>
> "The problem of meaning will then be resolved as the individual's purpose merges with the universal flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 240).

Reflective Running: The Value of Time

Feeling the familiar hazy cloud take over my head, I stood up from my desk. I had been writing trying to synthesize ideas about the stimulus but could not seem to reach clarity. It seemed the only thing that was helpful in these situations was to go for a run. Some people thought I was crazy signing up for the marathon while being in school but for me it made perfect sense. "Running," I thought, "seemed the perfect medicine for clarity and marathon training goals gave me enough structure to ensure I would go for several runs a week, some of them long." Since I am a slow runner, training allowed

plenty of time for gaining clarity. The fascinating thing about the process was that the thinking part involved little effort. When searching for clarity I would never focus on the topic or even think about it at all. Instead I would go about my run and, eventually, ideas would literally seem to pop into my head. I had stopped running with music, which may have helped. Regardless, I felt fortunate for the little trick I had found. At around the fifth kilometre I found myself thinking about the stimulus and how students seemed more successful when they could relate and connect to it easily. "Perhaps accessibility has influence over their ability to conduct philosophical activity with a stimulus," I thought. Before this I had assumed a more simplistic version of why the picture book stimuli had been more engaging for students. I had assumed that it had to do with the pictures being intrinsically interesting and the particular novels we were using lacking in literary merit.

I continued to believe that those attributes were significant but it never occurred to me how important it was that students felt secure and confident about what they were discussing. I thought back to my Philosophy of Language classes and it started to come together. I never participated in that class. I loved participating in Philosophy classes but I never seemed to be able to understand the material. I would read articles several times and we even had self-made study groups to help clarify material but I never wanted to discuss it because I could not understand it enough to feel comfortable talking about it. "When students can understand the material easily they can talk and think about it with depth," I thought. If too much energy is exhausted with understanding then depth cannot occur. Similarly, the simple intimidation factor could stop further engagement. Smiling, I drank some water and felt thankful as the air grew cooler. Thinking about the stimulus had distracted me and I only had a few kilometres left to go.

My thoughts drifted back to my experience in Mendham, New Jersey to the nights in the solarium where I could be seen huddled in the corner writing in my orange notebook. Each day we conducted community of inquiry sessions ourselves, facilitated by experienced practitioners. Later in the week we had the opportunity to lead sessions. I was amazed that some people seemed to filter and contribute information immediately, while I preferred to ponder and think about things. It was typically at night, as we socialized, that things started becoming clear for me because I had time to let them sink in. In the community of inquiry sessions my friend Patricia had been struggling because she found discussions excessively analytical and lacking openness for creativity and artistic expression. I tended to agree but had trouble synthesizing everything while immersed in the situation. Sitting in the solarium I gained clarity, realizing that certain ideas and structures were implicitly encouraged depending on ideas valued by community members. Several members of the community possessed impressive analytical skills so it was not surprising that there was dissonance when others lacked that skill level and inclination. I wrote some notes and thought about storytelling and the value it can have as well as lack. I felt cloudy about the amount dialogue should be restricted in the community of inquiry and at the same time realized that one of the objectives of the community of inquiry is for individuals to learn to think critically and logically so this process needed to be scaffolded for them. While I had not experienced clarity about the situation, I had come to understand it better both with time for reflection as well as opportunity to write about it in solitude, processing ideas in my head.

Arriving home from the run I thought about how reflection time had been valuable for my students. Students grew more confident about activities involving *The*

Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964) as we did more. As long as activities were diverse, students did not grow bored and the quality of their work typically got better as they went along. I poured a glass of water and sat at my computer to write.

"Clarity exists in many forms and not always immediately. Perhaps it is through discussion, reading or in the form of a question but one can never tell what will work until that moment of clarity is reached. Ideas seem to take on a power of their own, a power that strengthens as they sit and, in the subconscious, seem to gain momentum waiting to have their depth realized with just the right stimulus, question or factor. Some students will get a concept the first time, or perhaps the second. Others will not, even if explored several ways, because they may need more time or instruction. It is important to explore concepts in different ways and revisit them over a period of time."

I thought back to Robin and her narrative inspired by *Emily's Art* (Catalanotto, 2006). The process not only helped her with creating her story but the other students as well because part of the process gave her the opportunity to share the story with them, thus providing another chance for them to grasp the concept of using narrative philosophically. We used the picture book as a stimulus for several weeks because we involved so many activities in the process. Students were able to begin thinking when we did the philosophical questions as a class, continue thinking when they came up with independent philosophical questions and then let ideas sink in as they wrote their narrative. After the writing process, students could revisit the concept when we looked for connections with philosophical questions within the narrative text. The process was not at all repetitive and yet students had the opportunity to revisit the concept in several different ways. My gaze drifted up to the hour glass sitting on a shelf above my desk. I traced my finger along the exterior and thought about the pattern and previous decisions

I had made to teach curriculum philosophically in a figure eight pattern. We had explored *Voices in the Park* (Browne, 1998) quickly and I did not feel that students got much out of it. We discussed the book in the community of inquiry but we did not go through several different activities as we had with other picture books. Reflecting through revisiting subject matter in different ways was clearly effective.

The next night I sat typing student reflection data and had an opportunity to think about it. I had read it before but this time I was able to gain clarity on what the students were saying. They were clear that they did not like disruptive noise.

"I don't like when other people are talking when they don't have the ball," Jacqueline had written as a response to what she did not like about learning philosophically.

Nadia echoed, "When people are talking when people are trying to work and when people are not thinking of a good one."

Molly's said, "Sometimes I have a really good idea [and] then someone cuts me off and I forget my great one."

"I do not like when people are wandering around and stuff and distracting me and talking," I read off Henry's sheet.

I flipped back and started reading what students thought about sorting through thinking processes when they write. I smiled as I read Dara's, which was full of expression, "Sometimes, sometimes not, kind of, kind of not. Sometimes it is really LOUD. But sometimes it is really quiet; when it is quiet yes, when it is loud no."

Keenan's read, "Not really because sometimes I hear people talking" and Erin said she found it hard to concentrate. I had asked her about this when she had given a

similar answer during the second reflection time. I asked her if it continued to be too noisy and she replied "Now it's easy. I don't know how to explain that it's easier."

Nadia said that she could not work when people were talking and Henry clarified, "It is easy to do [with] an easy subject but a hard subject is usually harder to do." I could not help but be surprised at how important a quiet environment was for students. It was interesting to me because talk is valued so highly in education, as we can learn by talking about things.

"What we do not discuss enough," I thought, "is how to structure that talk in an effective way." Clearly discussion is valuable and necessary in the community of inquiry as it enables students to move forward with their ideas. The discussions are structured, other than when students turn and talk to their partner, and students were learning to talk only when they had the talking ball. It makes sense that random talking as they were writing would irritate them. In the past I would allow quiet talking when they were writing because that way they could easily help each other with ideas but it did not seem to work well with these students. First of all, it tended to go from quiet to loud very quickly and second of all, they clearly did not like it, as exemplified in their reflections. I could not blame my students because I needed incredibly strict conditions to write as well. I needed disruptions silenced and music for motivation.

The next day I paid careful attention during the community of inquiry to think about whether students had grown in their ability to listen to each other and only talk when they had the talking ball. We started with the light meditation that students had grown accustomed to. I watched as all of the students closed their eyes. I softly instructed them to breathe in and out with my count. We repeated this process ten times and then we started a relaxation exercise. I suggested students relax their forehead and

then their shoulders followed by their belly, legs and feet. Students did so as they were seated in a crisscross position, some of them seated with their thumb and index finger pressed together. I always found this part interesting because, while they had their eyes closed, I could visually see their body language change as we went through the process. Because we had been working on listening within the community of inquiry, we then went through a visualization exercise where students pictured themselves listening to the person with the ball. I asked them to picture turning toward the person, looking at them and then thinking about what that person had to say. I then asked students to picture themselves holding the ball and sharing their contribution confidently with the group. A couple of students fidgeted a bit but I could not help but notice how much more settled students had become after practicing the process over the three months. I started to notice the progress I had seen when I watched the first and second video sequentially. The students were getting much better at listening to each other and staying on task, especially when we worked on it explicitly.

The discussion in the community of inquiry session went quickly that day and it was not long before I found us at the metacognitive portion. Despite the fact that this came at the end, I was always careful to include it because I knew how important it was for students to reflect on the learning process itself. This was what generated insight for the listening ball in the first place. I typically would try to ask two questions, as I had learned in Mendham, so that students could reflect on one thing that they had done well and one thing that could have been better. I started with the constructive question and asked students how they thought they did with including everyone that day. A few students had their thumb up, some had their thumb sideways and some had their thumb pointed down. I asked a student who had their thumb up to say why. They suggested that

lots of different people got to speak so they thought the community did a pretty good job. Erin had her thumb down so I asked her to share with the group as well. “I had my hand up the whole time,” she replied, “and I was never chosen once!” I had agreed with her. Molly had been chosen at least three times, while some students had not had a turn at all. We discussed the importance of including everyone and trying to give everyone a chance and then I went on to the second question. I asked students how they did with generating ideas and almost all thumbs pointed up. I asked a student why they had their thumb up and they pointed to the chart and asserted that we had recorded and generated many ideas for the chart. Connor put up his hand and asked if we could count them so we did and found out there had been thirty-four ideas. As I sat down at my computer that night finishing typing the reflections I breathed a bit easier. Despite the fact that students had been concerned about the noise level in the classroom in their earlier reflections, it was obvious to me that the listening, noise level and classroom environment in general were getting better. It was only with specific focus on this, however, that it was possible.

The next evening I had a productive couple of hours and noticed I had not deviated to check my email once. This was not typical and looking at the work I had accomplished compared to a typical typing day, it was evident that the focus I had was linked to the productive success I experienced. I had played instrumental music but otherwise the house had been quiet and my puppy had slept by my desk. Disruptions were minimal and I was able to write idea after idea, with one thought flowing to the next. It reminded me of the feeling I would frequently get when completing my undergraduate degree staying up all night to write a paper because I did not want to break the flow. I did not have that luxury anymore, however, and I found myself reflecting on the feeling and trying to analyze ways I could recreate it. I thought of

Molly who seemed to constantly have that flow experience where she would literally begin working and continue until it was time to move on to the next task. It was incredible, especially for someone in grade two. Holly worked in a similar fashion and so did Ryan. They were so quick to become engaged in their work, regardless of the task and then there was Elliot who had come such a long way in becoming engaged in the work he was doing. I smiled at the thought of his bully story and my thoughts turned to Dara.

When Dara was disengaged in a task she might chat with her friends or even play with things on her desk. She might look around the room or simply find things to distract her, keeping her from completing her work. It was never the case that Dara found the work to be too challenging but it seemed as though some projects were more interesting to her than others. When Dara was engaged in a task that was meaningful to her it was as if she entered another world and it was fascinating to watch that world come alive. Complete with images, Dara's writing would bound off the page. At times her images would run into the margins or perhaps be in the middle of the page but all of them would relate to the voice and theme of the writing she was involved in. Dara's head stayed down as she worked quickly and intricately evidently in a high mode of concentration. I had noticed students observe Dara and begin to incorporate images of their own to enhance their work. Some of the images would even involve colour for effect. I knew that when Dara set off on a task that she had designed herself the product would involve high quality work. When Dara was engaged, her work epitomized the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4), a state in which someone is so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter and something I wanted again and again both for my students and for myself.

The Recursive Process

Writing became a necessary part of the philosophical process because of the reflection and time for meaning-making that it enabled. Students had authentic reasons to write through the philosophical process involved with the questions they voted on in the community of inquiry. Students need to think about ideas in order to put them on paper. As evident in the narrative, the *Emily's Art* and *The Giving Tree* processes enabled children to experience the figure eight method of learning in which they revisit a subject several times to provide both the time to reflect and think about it deeply to enhance their understanding. Some learning, such as meaning-making, may not only benefit from but require this time. Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest meaning will only develop if we give children time (p. 115). When I experience something over a period of time or have the opportunity to explore it in different ways I grow to understand it better. Students gave progressively more insight into questions we explored with *The Giving Tree* and *Emily's Art* the more related activities we completed. Following the pattern that Robin used to complete her narrative inspired by philosophical questions, students came up with individual philosophical questions before writing their poems about courage.

It was evident in the questions and poem that Dara came up with that she had done serious thinking about courage. Dara's questions consisted of the following: "1. If a rat was in a cave stuck with a cat he wouldn't be afraid with courage. 2. Courage saves us from scaredness but what about despair?!?" Dara then wrote a poem inspired by her questions, which she shared aloud in a sing song-voice:

Courage

A rat, rat, rat was stuck

with a cat, cat, cat

in a cave with a dog and a bear.

So the bear ate the dog and the dog ate the cat

And the rat ran away with courage

Students had an opportunity to share writing with parents and Dara thought it would be beneficial to explain her thoughts: "If you're scared, courage will save you because it won't actually happen but if [something] will actually happen, would courage save you from that too?" In our initial community of inquiry session on courage we did not reach the depth that Dara did in her reflection. With time to think and write, she was able to think about courage in a way that emphasized that courage may help you to face your fears, but what you fear can harm you. Courage may in fact prevent your avoiding harm. Dara's rat may have had courage but it was not courage but circumstance that saved him from the cat.

My original goal was that students progress to a point at which they could start writing about their own individual philosophical questions. We did not get there during the study because students seemed to rely on the initial community of inquiry session and the discussion with their peers to get them to the next step. My goal would eventually be to have students generate their own wondering questions and reflect in a mode of their choice, engaging in independent philosophical activity. Students were able to make philosophical connections between wondering questions, the stimulus and their writing as well as that of others'. I think it is important for students to entertain both independent and collective wondering questions so they can benefit from understanding and capacities of others while having freedom to explore contextually relevant topics

and questions. Reflecting on text after collaborating on philosophical questions was productive because students could then voice their own individual thoughts. Victoria wrote the following reflection after we discussed *The Giving Tree*.

My Giving Tree

> *My tree looks like this because I disagree with the boy. Why would he destroy the tree if he liked it so much? When he was little he loved it and he always played with the tree. Now he is using the tree for money, a house and a boat. I do not think he likes it so much anymore because why would he cut it down if he liked it? I would not cut something down if I liked it. It would make no sense.*

Students described what their tree would look like if they had been the protagonist in the story. In contrast to the boy in the story who had used his tree for various purposes, leaving it as a mere stump at the end of the story, many but not all of the students decided to draw and illustrate a tree in full bloom thriving with fruit and healthy leaves. This activity allowed students to reflect on their own opinion and experiment with giving evidence and reasoning to support their claims. It also provided a good teaching opportunity for me as I was able to model critical questions that enabled them to revaluate their position from alternative perspectives. I asked questions such as where they would live and how they would build a home if they did not use trees.

The Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964) had not been the first text we explored but the first picture book, which made a substantial difference in the philosophical depth we were able to explore. I had been concerned because I found that we seemed to be racing through the philosophical novel, *Kio and Gus* (Lipman, 1982), that we had been using as a stimulus. We would typically read a section of the novel and discuss it in the community of inquiry. Following that, students would write a piece that I assigned

inspired by something that came out of the community of inquiry. We would then launch right back into the next chapter because students quickly exhausted their ideas for writing. They displayed no desire to linger on a subject or part of the chapter and I felt they had insufficient time to reflect on the ideas generated. We were jumping through different subjects because I had been using other forms of stimuli to teach other aspects of the writing program. This, too, may have contributed to my feeling of discontinuity and fragmentation.

On the other hand, students loved exploring picture books, so we could truly take our time lingering through activities based on them. This gave students time for reflection and allowed seamless integration with other parts of the curriculum. The shift to picture books enabled me to teach both Philosophy and other aspects of the curriculum through a single stimulus. It therefore became easier to spend more time with the stimulus and the resulting range of ideas than when I was teaching with the Lipman novels. Weaving the instruction together this way enabled students to take time with the reflective writing activities that followed the community of inquiry sessions and then share them with their peers. Students benefitted from the knowledge and understanding of their peers going forward as well as the additional time for their thinking to develop and change. The slower pace made the children more at ease, increased their participation and, because they were not parachuted into a new subject every second day, helped alleviate the novelty of the community of inquiry. The care they took in preparing the published copy of their tree piece and their willingness to take time to do it well illustrates the importance of adequate time in giving students space they needed to think about and be comfortable with the concepts we were studying.

In addition to reflecting individually, students were able to use the community to assist in the reflective process. The community of inquiry provided a means for students to share their narratives and interact with those of others. As they reflected on and rewrote their own, they had the opportunity to consider them in light of other's ideas, whether similar or conflicting, and provide more depth for their own writing. I could see the understanding students gained from listening to other's stories because they would then use ideas from those stories and alter them to fit their own perspective. This was particularly true when students were having difficulty. We shared poetry frequently and students would take on an idea they liked such as "courage is…" and alter it to suit them. Students needed time to reflect individually and collaboratively to add meaning and depth to their understanding of philosophical activity.

Listening

In the context of this study listening has three dimensions: students listening to each other and to the teacher and, perhaps most important, the teacher listening to the students. Haynes and Murris (2012) assert that listening is overlooked in educational practice (p. 187). I was aware of the importance of listening to students, as the Philosophy for children literature, my learning at the Mendham Summer Institute and my own personal teaching Philosophy had made its importance clear. Listening to children involves more than simply consulting them, as we must truly hear what they are saying and take their views into consideration (p. 188). For students to be considered as participating they must have active involvement in decision-making as well as ownership over the decision-making process itself (p. 189). Children must be respected for the thoughts, concerns and choices they have as individuals (p. 189). While I often felt guilty that I was choosing stimuli, I was careful to listen to opinions students had. At

times I was not able to copy down what they were saying quickly enough, which was problematic because it was important to them. On some occasions students were unable to inform me of my error until the end of the discussion because other students had not called on them but they remained persistent to be sure that their views were included on the chart stand. I was able to get a sense of what students thought from reading their reflection questions in the data. Student responses to the reflection questions were my most useful form of data collection and a practice I will continue routinely in the future. These types of practices are important in education, as listening is becoming recognized as increasingly important in childhood studies, essential for ethical relationships and essential for learning (pp. 190, 191). Despite its importance we cannot take listening for granted, as it requires a great deal of effort (p. 193).

It is beneficial to consider what is involved in listening. Haynes and Murris (2012) assert listening is not only necessary for thinking but essential in thinking because we cannot listen effectively and actively without thinking (p. 194). If we are actively listening to a person then we must necessarily be thinking about what that person is saying in order to process the information they are giving. I would agree that when students were listening at the coloured mat and engaged in what the talker was saying they were thinking the hardest. I am not referring to when students were quiet, as this is something all together different than listening but instead the practice of hearing what someone is saying, attending to the person and reflecting on what was heard. I learned throughout the course of the study that, although we could get better at listening to each other as a class, it was a practice that we needed to attend to constantly (p. 217). It is a concept that we struggled with as adults at Mendham and I think it is a concept that I need to work on in my own life so I suspect it will always be at the forefront when

teaching philosophically. Philosophical activity can help students with listening and dialogue skills but like Haynes (2008, p. 158-163) I found that students needed effective listening strategies with each other for philosophical activity to be successful.

Noise and Disruption

In addition to the importance of listening it became evident as in student quotations in the narrative that students did not like when other students were distracting them, talking or generally not listening to the person speaking. Students were bothered by noise and disruption. I was puzzled by results that came out of the data because, previously, I had not experienced grade two students being concerned about noise in the classroom. I was surprised with the idea of seven-year-old students requesting their own discipline. The only difference in the environment that seemed a plausible explanation was the greater level of challenge to which the students were responding. I wondered if a combination of finding challenge in their work and engaging in meaningful work was inspiring them to request more discipline in the work environment. In response to the students' requests we started having a relatively regimented expectation for quiet when we were actively involved in the writing process. This differed when it was important to engage in dialogue and share ideas with others. When writing, students were expected to write quietly and refrain from wandering about the room so that others could concentrate effectively. The response to this expectation had been positive and when students were asked how they liked the working environment this way they indicated that they enjoyed writing in a quiet atmosphere. Listening and a quiet working environment were important to students so it was important that I addressed their concerns explicitly. Including the metacognitive part of the program as well as beginning with light meditation and relaxation enabled us to work toward the issue in a proactive way.

Listening and a quiet environment to support it were essential for students to feel secure when learning philosophically and the community of inquiry provided a space to strengthen these skills.

Meditation

Inspired by Haynes (2008), I experimented with light meditation and relaxation so students could take a proactive role in helping themselves listen and attend (p. 79-81). Listening and attention is not something that necessarily comes naturally to students and in many cases it needs to be taught explicitly. This instruction helped with setting up the environment for success and enabled structured time for students to think and reflect on their learning. Relaxation and meditation is encouraged by Haynes (2008) as a practice that should be taught by the teacher (p. 79-81). She specifies the difference between being told to be quiet in an authoritative way and being taught to practice quietening the mind for thinking purposes (p. 79-81). The practice of Philosophy for children can also be beneficial for listening and Haynes cites a number of studies that indicate a positive correlation in teaching Philosophy to children and increased performance in listening and dialogue skills among students (pp. 158-163).

The meditation portion of our community of inquiry sessions grew to be popular with students. Early in the process of the community of inquiry sessions we developed a routine of doing a light meditation activity before engaging in discussion as a group. The meditation started with thinking of a safe or pleasant place and then progressed to combine elements of the metacognitive practice. Children warmed up to this practice quickly and even on the second day were more responsive to falling into the routine of closing their eyes and expressing that they did not appreciate distracting noises. When I engaged in the practice consistently with students I could observe improvement in

students' ability to settle and be still. It only took a few sessions before children were able to focus on the meditation activity immediately. It was evident that students were happy about the meditation piece, as they smiled when we began and responded quickly after starting. When asked what students liked about learning philosophically and what advice they would give to another teacher teaching philosophically Holly said, "They should do the listening thing. I do not know the name of it. And also they should bring them a little ball so students know when it is their turn to talk."

Molly said, "I would do the relaxing your mind thing and I would get my students into a circle." Mid-way through the research process I was leading the students through a visualization exercise in which students were asked to picture their worries floating away in a helium balloon and Dara's face literally lit up despite her eyes being closed. It was incredible to watch the students' seeming ability to take information in as their eyes were closed, their thoughts left only to the meditation exercise at hand and their imagination. I would conclude that this was an integral piece of the community of inquiry, considering the request for increased quiet and decrease of disruptive noise from students. Students eventually got to the point of requesting the meditation session to quiet them down and help them be still.

Metacognition: Learning about Learning

Along with structuring time in the program for reflecting on concepts, the stimulus and philosophical questions, time was allotted for metacognition. Children are capable of thinking about their own thinking and correcting their ideas by reflecting on them (Bruner, 1996, p. 57). Metacognition is what children think about remembering, thinking and learning and making sense out of the process of thinking itself (p. 58, 88). The metacognitive piece is essential as part of conducting Philosophy with children

because it requires students to self-correct errors and partiality through learning through other perspectives (Lipman, 1988, pp. 147-148). Haynes and Murris (2012) suggest that the critical reflection and self-correction that come as part of being a member of the community of inquiry affect a child's entire being (pp. 3-9). Fisher (2001) discusses how P4C can help teachers consciously plan for students' metacognitive development and one of his students reported liking Philosophy because he could talk about what was important to him specifically as well as the story (pp. 76-77).

Although I had asked my students questions about their learning in the past, I had not structured this type of reflection into their programming. We included the thumb gauge as part of the metacognitive piece following every community of inquiry session and at other times in the class when I thought it might be beneficial. In some instances, students felt comfortable contributing to the thumb gauge before they felt comfortable contributing to the discussion in the community of inquiry. The students came to understand the thumb gauge quickly. I asked children questions such as how they had listened and how their listening had improved. We discussed effective working environments, their ability to come up with different ideas and their ability to advocate for different opinions. During the sessions I tried to model desirable community of inquiry behaviour such as giving the talking ball to someone who had not yet had an opportunity. At one point Molly explained that her thumb was pointed up in the thumb gauge because students were able to express a number of different opinions. Students became adept at giving reasons for their thumb gauge opinion. Erin was able to articulate confidently that some people had more turns than others and that students needed to do a better job of including everyone. The thumb gauge became a way for students to become aware of their actions that made learning difficult. They also became

more cognizant of including everyone in the discussion. As students became more experienced I would continue to progress questions in the thumb gauge to more difficult concepts like whether they had asked questions for clarification and whether they were able to keep the discussion focused on the initial philosophical question.

Sharing student writing worked to develop students' metacognition and was, perhaps, the most effective tool in supporting student writing. Students loved sharing their writing. Students enjoyed listening to each other and being able to read writing they worked hard on and were able to identify features in their peers' writing that we were focusing on in class, which offered positive reinforcement for student sharing. Students were able to listen to their peers and get ideas for content as well as see examples of good writing at their own level, encouraging them to bring up their own writing standards. This activity proved to be supportive and engaging, evident in student participation with raised hands and the attention they paid to each other during sharing time. Periodically I reflected in my research journal that students needed more time to go back and read each other's work and I continuously struggled to incorporate that part into my daily instructional practice. Going forward I would incorporate that segment into the routine of the day and have a minimum of ten minutes set aside for sharing. While I knew that providing space for sharing would not necessarily imply metacognition was happening, I observed that metacognition took place as students began to develop and add ideas to their own writing after listening to that of their peers. This was especially true when students initially struggled for ideas as was the case with the "courage" poem and "giving tree" writing exercise.

Learning Flow

Students were concerned about being able to concentrate on challenging work. This attention, or psychic energy, as it might be considered in terms of flow is the most important component in improving the quality of our experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 33). The students realized that their work was hindered when they were unable to give it their full attention and were understandably frustrated by this. When we experience flow we are able to forget unpleasant and irrelevant thoughts and experiences, focusing instead on the task at hand giving it our complete attention (p. 58). For this to occur, individuals must first be able to reach the experience of flow so they can block everything else out. If this process is disrupted then it can become difficult to concentrate and impossible to engage in a flowing working state. People become so involved in the activity of flow that it is spontaneous or even automatic but any lapse in concentration erases it (pp. 53, 54, 63) so I should not have been surprised that students did not like having their concentration compromised because it was eliminating their chance of experiencing flow. An environment full of noise and wandering distractions would make it difficult for grade two students to sustain concentration long enough to achieve this state of flow and immerse themselves into an activity (p. 210), especially when the ability to attend to something must be trained and my students had only been in school for two years (p. 119). What is particularly interesting about the state of flow is the challenge and complexity necessary for one to experience enjoyment (pp. 50, 149). This leads me to wonder whether students needed this challenge and complexity to remain engaged in their learning. Students may need challenge and complexity to achieve optimal experience with an activity and philosophical activity can provide that challenge and complexity.

Students were not able to recognize and value this complexity themselves but they were able to communicate that they liked to be challenged and that hard work was important. Jacqueline said, “I love to write because it is so good to write.”

When Peter responded about writing and hard work he said, “Yes because I really like to get information.”

Connor articulated that “in writing you can learn new things” and Elliot said he liked it because it was good for his brain.

Ryan said, “It makes you smarter in a way” and Owen said that it helps you learn more.

The students echoed these thoughts in their actions when they completed the first round of reflection data. Before students completed the reflections I told them what it would be used for and gave them status as partner researchers, adding importance to their work including in the title, recognizing them as researchers. Despite the fact that answering these questions was a difficult task at this stage of grade two, students worked hard on them and handed them in smiling, evidently proud of their achievement. I recorded in my research journal that I could not hear anything during writing time on that day. The novelty wore off slightly during the second and third round of data collection but students continued to complete their work and give evidence to support their claims. Students do not always respond positively to hard work but are able to see its value and, when in conjunction with the concept of flow, may be able to appreciate the complexity in work for intrinsic value. Students may not necessarily have understood the concept of flow, but they appreciated the results of the challenging work that it enabled them to complete and sought out an environment which would support it.

The authenticity present in learning philosophically supported flow as well. The deep sense of enjoyment that we feel when we are in control of our own actions becomes a landmark for how we should experience life (p. 3). Controlling our actions in a school environment ought to inspire the way we experience life in school. Students had an opportunity to control their actions and the environment through choosing questions discussed in the community of inquiry and discussing and reflecting on what would make for a better learning environment. All of the ideas came from the students. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) advocates that when information comes into our awareness congruent with our goals psychic energy and attention flow effortlessly giving us optimal experience (p. 39). Student work must be authentic to their goals and interest. Their goals need to be consistent with the work in which they are investing their energy so they can develop self confidence (p. 39). Students could focus on creating narratives from the perspective of bullies because they had a vested interest in the dynamics of the classroom. There is a natural enjoyment between learning and enjoyment in schooling so it is important for students to personally take control over the direction of their own learning (pp. 47, 139). A person must be able to develop a personally meaningful sense of what one's experience is all about (p. 142). Students must not only be challenged but challenged in subjects and concepts that are important and interesting to them. This can be done through philosophical instruction because students take what is meaningful to them from the stimuli. It is interesting to consider flow in the context of the community of inquiry, for the function of our conversations becomes not to accomplish things but to improve the quality of experience (p. 129). This concept seems to be congruent with sustained thinking, as it recognizes value in thinking about something in depth and building knowledge upon it instead of for the purpose of reaching an instrumental goal.

It is the contextual integrity and relevance for individual students that make authentic and student-led learning important for school to be relevant and engaging for individual students.

It is important to centre education from a contextual standpoint instead of focusing on content when dealing with student motivation (Bruner, 1977, p. 70). It is critical for students to develop an appreciation for intellectual activities in themselves (p. 73). In my experience, my colleagues and I have thought of motivation as keeping students' attention and interest, but we should be fostering an inherent understanding valuing intellectual activity. Philosophy has potential to provide a means to critique, discuss and analyze material in a manner that stimulates the mind leaving children eager for further learning in the long-term. Sustaining student interest in the short-term looks different than sustaining student interest in the long-term (p. 72). I was and am interested in sustaining long-term student interest and authenticity, combined with an environment that supports challenging learning, can make this possible.

My students needed time to reflect and revisit concepts to learn and to understand. They needed an effective working environment that allowed them to concentrate on challenging tasks absent disruption. The children needed explicit instruction in order to understand how to create that environment as well as in how to listen and contribute to such an environment. It became clear to me that it is not sufficient to instruct students to behave in particular ways but instead we must help them see value in effective working behaviours themselves. This can be done through explicit instruction, metacognitive community discussion and providing challenge so that students require an effective working environment to succeed.

Epilogue

Individual Student Success

> "Security is essential for learning… we must have a sense of control as well as a lack of worrying about control in order to experience productivity through the flow of work" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 59).

"For a student to feel free enough to lose control they need security and ultimately security is the teacher's responsibility." This is what I thought as I sat on my charcoal couch in March with papers scattered around me and hot chocolate sitting on the coffee table. I had been reflecting on what I had discovered in the study. Teaching philosophically enabled me to challenge all of my students, including those requiring enrichment and remediation. It also allowed all students to thrive in the writing program if several components were present. I made notes about the essential components and stopped for a moment, content that I had made changes to my teaching practice throughout the study reflecting on the importance of the changes in my research journal as they emerged into clarity.

Charting my paper into diagrammed blocks on a sheet of paper to summarize what I learned from the study, I wrote: "The program requires an immediately engaging and accessible stimulus so that students can connect with material and engage in dialogue about it (Appendix E). Comparing picture books and Lipman's (1982) curriculum, I found that picture books worked better in teaching from a philosophical framework. Students engaged with picture books critically and creatively while sustaining thoughtful dialogue about questions they found authentically interesting." Shifting to the next block I wrote on, eager to sustain my thought process and flow: "The community of inquiry must include an environment built on mutual respect where

students have an opportunity to dialogue with each other and adjust their understanding of meaning accordingly. The facilitator must understand that autonomous learning takes time and model effective inquiry. The sharing process among community members must be scaffolded to enable success."

I drew an extra line, expanding the box to make it big enough to include the detail above. "The support and scaffolding the community of inquiry gave students was remarkable," I thought. I then thought of the importance of narrative and an effective working environment generated through student reflection. I smiled, content with power they had had, and continued writing in the next block.

"The Philosophy for children program pairs well with learning the narrative fiction genre because it allows children to play with creative ideas and provides security so they can synthesize real ideas and concerns through lives of made-up characters and events." Students had been able to play using their imagination. I had never thought about writing as playing before participating in the study but, if done in the proper context, playing is exactly what narrative fiction has potential to be. I then wrote "personal narrative" below narrative fiction in the box because this was how students had used writing to understand their lives better. Some had gravitated to this as well. Finally, I wrote "reflection" down on my note paper and beside it wrote: "Students must be given opportunity to reflect on their ideas and processes through dialoguing in the community of inquiry, writing and sharing their writing and ideas with peers. Metacognitive exercises are necessary for students to reflect on community of inquiry practices including effective listening, depth in thought and equitable participation."

Learning philosophically through picture books, the community of inquiry, narrative fiction and a reflective and quiet environment, students experienced success

and realized their individual potential. This included students with specific needs for additional challenge or support. While these students were vastly different, they had individual learning needs I had a responsibility to meet. Teaching writing philosophically enabled me to challenge Dara, who needed enrichment, while supporting Erin who required additional support and scaffolding. I thought about Erin at the beginning of the year. She was small and sweet and constantly tried her best. She tried to make sense of what was going on around her and do the best work she could. She had come in at an A reading level, which is the lowest reading level. It had been difficult for Erin to understand classroom dynamics and she would write in strings of letters when she was able to generate any writing at all. When I had the opportunity to work with Erin I would scribe for her so she would have the opportunity to express ideas without limitation from writing difficulties. When I scribed for her it was clear that she had great ideas and could think creatively with good word choice, evident she had been paying attention in lessons that taught such skills explicitly. Erin often needed additional instructions in order to pick up on what had transpired in the classroom but once she understood it she worked hard to do her best. Conscientious is the best word to describe Erin's work ethic and yet the word did not seem to do justice to the way she would pour herself into her writing. Erin worked laboriously over pieces despite the fact that when she finished even she could not read them back to herself because phonetic meaning was lost in the process of translation. Yet she continued to improve.

Erin went from producing strings of letters to separating letters into meaningful words that could be recognized as high frequency words with correct spelling or phonetically meaningful spelling. Her pieces made sense and were organized conventionally. Erin's writing improved tremendously and her difficulties did not

impede her from participating in philosophical discussion. Erin remembered and articulated that Robin could give evidence to support her claim and she showed progress in her ability to demonstrate critical thinking, independence and logical reasoning in her contribution to discussion, exemplifying her listening skills and engagement in following discussion. Erin's example highlighted improvement possible for individual students and the fact that students who have difficulty writing are not necessarily the same students who struggle in philosophical dialogue in the community of inquiry, offering them an avenue for success.

Dara had also benefitted from learning philosophically. In the past I found that students who were doing well were left to continue doing well but not necessarily challenged to reach their potential. This was not the case for Dara. While she was incredibly bright, she did not always learn efficiently in a typical educational environment. She did not always listen to instructions and would not produce her best work if she was not in the mood. She would occasionally get distracted and chat with her friends. Philosophical inspiration was effective for Dara. She wrote many pieces that went off on her own creative tangent. Some were related to the assignment I had given students, some were not and I was thrilled. Some of her best work was on pieces that she initiated and wrote, which I believed showed ingenuity. I was pleased that the program was flexible enough to allow and subtly encourage it.

Dara's individual potential could be realized with enrichment opportunity. This came naturally teaching philosophically, as community of inquiry sessions were stimulating and challenging because assignments and activities came from student interest in community of inquiry sessions. Technically some assignments may have been considered enrichment because they involved individual programming but they simply

became part of teaching philosophically in the classroom. I asked Dara if she would like to write a story about frogs after she had raised a concern about frogs being held in captivity in one of our first community of inquiry sessions. I told her it would be a special project, knowing she would benefit from a challenge. Her project did not set her apart from the community of inquiry, but established her role firmly within it. Dara was not a student who would typically write the most or be the first to have her pencil to paper. When engaged, however, she was incredibly thoughtful and produced some of the most incredible work I have seen in my teaching career. Dara smiled and beamed when we spoke. She set to work immediately and produced the following narrative, while finishing the other writing activities the rest of the class were engaged in. It was seamless and easy to give Dara this challenge. She was able to work through the narrative independently because we had discussed the content in the community of inquiry:

Jamie the Frog

By Dara

Chapter 1

Once there was a frog. His name was Jamie. He loved his home very much but he would rather be out in the wild with his friends. Right now he's cooped up in a little cage like a chicken in the middle of a grade two class at West Kent. But one day when one student opened the top …

Chapter 2: Adventure Awaits

Jamie jumped out and the adventure began! First he quickly jumped off the table and out of the classroom. Then he went in the art room for a wet sponge so he wouldn't get too dry! Then he jumped out the door and oh so quickly he sped

across the street. Then he caught a boat to Africa at the harbour. One day on the boat Jamie set off to look for food. He saw several fish tanks on the boat but only one other African dwarf frog. Her name was Sarah. He wet the sponge and went over to meet Sarah just before Henry. The person who owned the room burst through the door with more luggage, like his tooth brush and stuff like that. Sarah said, "hide." So he got up, jumped off the table and then went under the bed! It was pretty dusty down there. He could hear the zipper on a suitcase.

Chapter 3: Almost There

He was staying under the bed that night. The next day he was up and running at 4:30 a.m.!!!! He took some food from Sarah for breakfast and then after his food he went on a walk. He had some seafood scraps from the buffet for lunch. Then he walked back to Henry's room and asked Sarah if she wanted to go to Africa. Sarah said, "Sure, why not!" They got there in a week! Jamie's wish finally came true!!!!

The End

Dara's narrative is detailed and impressive for the beginning of grade two. She had completed illustrations for each part, which were coloured throughout the story in her special book. Dara was challenged while having the opportunity to write about something that was interesting and important to her. Like all of my students, Dara was unique and I needed to consider her interests and strengths when I planned for her instruction. Dara herself said, "Same opinion + boring world = big mistake!!!" It was important for me to consider her unique perspective, interests and opinions as her teacher. Teaching philosophically made this possible and natural. It helped break Dara through the glass ceiling hovering above her head.

The components that came out of the data were essential for Dara and Erin's success. Picture books were important for Erin as stimulus because she could connect with them through pictures even if she could not read text on the page. She liked writing about the tree best and felt comfortable with the activity. Erin liked the assignment so much that she wrote about the tree during free writing opportunities and would even repeat the activity. Identifying with picture books, Erin was able to find success. Dara, too, enjoyed picture books because she could extend her thinking about them as far as she was capable. Picture books were not too simple for Dara because there was no limit to the ideas and discussion that could be generated from them. Dara's Silverstein costume was evidence of her engagement. Erin benefitted from the community of inquiry because she could learn from others' thoughts and draw on her peers' ideas when she lacked understanding. Similarly, Dara was both able to contribute to the community of inquiry with insight and hear and listen to the insight and reflections of others in dialogue. Both students were able to connect what their peers had to say and synthesize it to assist themselves. Regardless of their level of understanding, they could progress in the community of inquiry as they were ready. Erin and Dara benefitted from writing fictional narratives as well. Dara was drawn to the genre immediately, evident in her story about Jamie the Frog. While Erin initially preferred retell because it was easier for her to retell events in a story with which she was familiar, she came to like and be proficient with narrative fiction. She used graphic organizers to help sequence her thoughts and was able to write a detailed narrative fiction story independently.

The environment was perhaps where Dara and Erin differed most. Both students benefitted from reflection and experiencing activities in different ways. Erin liked to write different stories about the same concept because she built confidence that way and

Dara benefitted from time to think about things. Occasionally, Dara would seemingly be sitting in her seat doing nothing but I came to realize that it was because she was thinking about things in depth. When she found something difficult she would think even harder. Erin often referred to her frustration with noise and disruption, while noise did not seem to bother Dara at all. Dara did benefit from the meditation and metacognitive learning we did because she came to realize that, while she was able to concentrate through noise and disruption when engaged, others could not. Students in the class learned about each others' needs this way and took them more seriously because requests came from the students themselves in the metacognitive section of the community of inquiry. At the end of the year students would write letters to their future teacher letting them know what they were good at and things they found challenging. Erin would list several things she was good at including writing, while Dara would list writing as an activity she found challenging. Dara was an excellent writer so if she felt that writing was challenging, philosophical activity helped her reach greater potential because she felt she had more to learn.

I shifted on the cushion and thought about where I had started and how far we had come as a class. There was a gap between the holistic philosophy underpinning the curriculum and professional development practices and resources that supported curriculum implementation and teaching. My study had explored one possibility to bridge the gap. I was able to clarify several understandings that were true for us and that might well be relevant for other primary or elementary classrooms.

1. Teaching writing philosophically provides an authentic and student centred way of challenging students to deepen their reasoning skills, their understanding and their capacity for critical, creative and caring thinking.

2. The process allows for mistakes and imagination encouraging them, allowing students to use and maintain their innate levels of creativity (Robinson, 2001).
3. Teaching Philosophy through writing allows Philosophy to be taught within a subject so time allotment in the curricular timetable can be met. Giving students opportunity to develop reasoning and philosophical skills while allowing those skills to inform other subject matter is beneficial.
4. Philosophy has the means to inform and contribute to teaching within a subject in a manner that does not impede and or fragment that subject.
5. The study is significant in Prince Edward Island because, while philosophically minded teachers may already be including philosophical approaches in their practice and curricula, there is currently no documentation of any such initiatives to share with other teachers.
6. This study will benefit my own teaching practice for years to come, and also the students I will have the good fortune to teach in the future, because it has given me a sustained opportunity to reflect on my experience.

Philosophy for children enabled a teaching practice that challenged students and helped them to embrace that challenge through finding purpose and authenticity in learning. Teaching writing philosophically had potential to enable, empower, engage and deepen children's thinking skills in my classroom and that potential could extend elsewhere. I remembered Molly's suggestion that anyone could learn philosophically if Philosophy was just about wondering about things one was interested in and realized that Molly was right.

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Appendix A

Question Prompts for Children to Consider in their Reflections about Using Philosophy in Writing

The following questions were used as a means of generating data on students' opinions of the study. Questions were answered by students in individual writing samples as well as orally in group interview settings. The questions were meant to be open-ended to encourage autonomy in student feedback and simple so that they were accessible for all levels of learners. These questions were asked and reflected upon at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the study.

1. Do you like to write? Why or why not?
2. Do you find it easy or difficult to think of ideas to write about?
3. What subjects are the easiest for you to write about?
4. Do you wonder about things? If you do, what types of things do you wonder about?
5. Are you curious about anything in the world?
6. Do you find it easy to sort through your thinking processes when you write?
7. Do you find it easy to sort through your thinking processes when you speak out loud or with your friends?
8. Do you like being part of philosophical conversations?
9. Is there anything that you do not like about learning Philosophy when you are learning to write?
10. If you were the teacher would you do anything the same as your teacher?
11. What would you do differently than your teacher?

12. Do you have any advice for other teachers who might want to teach their students Philosophy when they are teaching children who are learning to write?

Appendix B

Consent Form

Dear Parent(s),

We invite your son or daughter to participate in a research project on teaching writing philosophically within the guidelines of the Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: Grades E-3. The title of the research study is Young writers as philosophers: Teaching writing through natural inquiry and community dialogue. Kelly Miles will conduct the research supervised by Dr. Alexander McAuley in the Department of Education at UPEI. We are conducting this study to fulfill the requirements of the Master of Education Leadership in Learning program. We are researching the extent to which teaching philosophically can benefit levels of student interest in the writing process and whether the writing process can assist students in developing reasoning skills, effective communication, critical thinking skills, depth in understanding and appreciation of the perspective of others within a student-led framework. It is anticipated that students will have the potential to enhance their skills in the areas listed above through participating in this study and may benefit from specific instruction in these areas. Data will be collected as a case study of the grade two class and will be presented in the form of narrative inquiry, which is a narrative of my experience teaching the students philosophically.

If you choose to have your child participate in this project it will take approximately 3.5 hours of your child's time. Please consult with your child before deciding whether or not you wish to have him or her participate. I will explain the study to them in class so they are aware of the details. Data collection will consist of three 30 minute video recorded lessons, three 30 minute reflection pieces and three 10 minute

clarification interviews. Data may also be taken from the work that your child completes in the daily school activities. All identifying features will be removed from this data to ensure that the use of data does not cause harm to your child or anyone that your child refers to in the data. As your child's teacher I am potentially in a position of having a conflict of interest. Please know that no harm will come to your child and whether or not your child participates in the project will in no way affect your child's assessment or experience in my class. Whether or not your child takes part in this study is completely up to you and your child. Your child may stop participating in the project at any time, without any consequences. If your child chooses not to participate he or she will be given an alternate activity to complete when data is being collected. We will keep all information that we collect during this project confidential and anonymous. We will take effort to ensure that your child will not be identified from any of his or her responses. We will destroy the video-recording of the lessons seven years after the thesis writing is complete and we will view them in a confidential environment or for professional purposes only. We will identify your child only by a pseudonym in the final transcript. Names will be kept on the writing samples until the data is analyzed to ensure proper interpretation of the manuscripts. Following data analysis all names will be blacked out for data storage as well as in final reports and presentations. Student names will not be used to identify students on the videotape recordings. Students will not be reviewing transcripts of interviews or reflective writing pieces, due to the time it would take given their age, except for in circumstances of discrepancies in the data.

Kelly Miles and Dr. Alexander McAuley are the only people who will have access to the data resulting from this research project with the exception of video data, which may be used for professional development purposes. We will retain the data in a

secure filing cabinet for seven years after the thesis is complete after which we will destroy it. If your child participates in this project you will be invited to attend a celebratory Philosophy evening at the school where your child will have the opportunity to share what they have learned and answer your questions. During this celebration I will share a PowerPoint presentation of my research results supported by a display of student work. I will also prepare a one page brochure summarizing results that will be distributed at the celebration or sent home to you if you are unable to attend. I will also have an extra copy of my thesis bound and kept in the school library in case you wish to sign it out. If your child decides to withdraw from the study at any time, you may still attend the celebratory event and find out the results of the study. I will also be available to explain the results of the study and answer any questions at this time.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please contact Kelly Miles at (902) 368-6065 or klmiles@edu.pe.ca.

For access to the full results of the research project once they are available, please contact Kelly Miles at (902) 368-6065 or klmiles@edu.pe.ca.

The Research Ethics Board of UPEI has approved this research project. If you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, or the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board, for assistance at (902) 620-5104, lmacphee@upei.ca.

Consent Form: Young writers as philosophers: Teaching writing through natural inquiry and community dialogue

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have discussed participation in the study with my child and I hereby consent to have my child take part in this study. However I realize that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child from the study at any time and/or for my child to not answer any question. I understand that I can keep a copy of the signed and dated consent form. I understand that the information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law.

I consent to have my child participate in the video recording, which may be shown publically for professional development purposes _____.

I consent to allow the researcher to use substantial quotations from my child _____.

Parent or Care Giver Signature: _____Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Guidelines for Identifying Patterns within Case Study Data

The following table will be completed for each individual student following the collection of the group interview and the collection of the writing sample. This data is not meant to be used as quantitative but instead to identify and recognize patterns and relationships within the data and among the students.

Concept Explored	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Level of Student Engagement	Student does not like writing and finds it difficult to engage in the writing process independently	Student occasionally is engaged in the writing process depending on the day or the subject	Student usually likes writing and can begin writing independently	Student loves writing and immediately begins writing independently when the writing process is initiated
Independent Student Participation in Discussion	Student does not participate in philosophical discussion even with prompting	Student will occasionally participate in philosophical discussion with prompting	Student usually participates in philosophical discussion independently and comes up with some creative ideas to contribute	Student consistently participates both with creative ideas and listening skills to understand and reflect on the perspectives of others in the class
Understanding and Ability to Demonstrate Philosophical Inquiry	Student does not engage in critical thinking skills and cannot think about problems beyond literal comprehension	Student is mostly literal in comprehension but occasionally has moments of contributing novel ideas of his/her own	Student contributes ideas to discussion that demonstrate critical thinking, independence, and logical reasoning	Student is able to synthesize information generated from multiple perspectives and give insight from a novel perspective of his/her own
Writing Skills	Student has emergent writing skills based on the 6+1 traits of writing	Student is developing some strengths in writing based on the 6+1 traits of writing	Student is strong in all areas based on the 6+1 traits of writing	Student demonstrates exemplary skills based on the 6+1 traits of writing and is able to synthesize philosophical information within text

Appendix D

Philosophical Writing Program

I followed the structure below with each philosophical stimulus I used. The stimulus, philosophical questions and community of inquiry portion of the lesson are consistent with the P4C method and my Mendham training but writing components are assignments and activities inspired by the discussion students had in the community of inquiry. Although each stimulus and the interactions of the classroom presented novel challenges and opportunity, I followed this rough plan for each stimulus. The time and depth we entertained for each stimulus differed depending on student engagement, opportunity the stimulus presented and amount of time we had considering other curricular commitments.

Stimulus	The stimulus was presented to the class. This involved reading contextually rich picture books or text that presented possibility for meaningful dialogue.
Philosophical Questions	Students were trained about what constitutes a philosophical question and generated them as a group. Students closed their eyes and voted on the question they found most interesting.
Metacognitive Meditation	I took students through simple meditative practices that helped them still and calm their bodies and minds to prepare for listening necessary in the community of inquiry. The meditative practice was reflective in nature so that students had opportunity to think about what is

	meant by the practice of listening and their improvement and ability in the practice.
Community of Inquiry	Students followed a line of inquiry that represented sustained thinking about a subject. Instead of a string of anecdotes that roughly resemble the discussion topic, students would sustain thinking about one topic and develop the ability to build on each others' thinking as a means of developing a collective knowledge or increased understanding of a concept or topic.
Writing Activity	Writing activities were developed based on questions and ideas that students developed in the community of inquiry. Although it was my goal for students to develop the ability to work with wondering questions individually and then write about them according to their interest, we needed to scaffold the experience with working from a single text. In the future I hope that students will be able to do this based on text of their choice but will need further support before developing this skill.
Community of Inquiry Reflection	We used this experience to return to the community of inquiry to either discuss the topic again after having opportunity to increase understanding through writing or for students to share their writing with peers. I prompted students to make connections between philosophical

	questions and their peers' writing, although in hindsight I would have liked to do more scaffolding and prompting in this area.

Program Description

Stimulus/Resource	Activities	Curricular Focus
Philosophy for Children: Practitioner Handbook (Gregory, 2008)	• Discussion of philosophical questions and how to form them • Independently developed lists of philosophical questions that students wonder about	Retell Word Choice
Kio and Gus (Lipman, 1982)	• Excerpt reading from *Kio and Gus* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion on what it would be like to be a donut including thoughts about whether it would be positive or negative • Writing reflection about what it would be like to be a donut and reasons to support opinions • Excerpt reading from *Kio and Gus*	Retell Word Choice

	• Community of inquiry discussion on what it would be like to be a peacock with mapping of reasons for and against • Writing reflection on what it would be like to be a peacock • Excerpt reading from *Kio and Gus* • Community of inquiry discussion on what it would be like to sail around the world • Generation of reasons for and against sailing around the world as well as line of inquiry mapping • Fictional narrative on sailing around the world to experiment with form and genre	
African Dwarf Frogs	• Philosophical questions about frogs • Community of inquiry discussion on how big a frog's tank should be to be comfortable • Enrichment opportunity for Dara: writing about a frog that escapes into the wild inspired by community	Retell Word Choice

	of inquiry thoughts • Persuasive piece on what the class frog's name should be	
The Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964)	• Reading of *The Giving Tree* • Philosophical questions about *The Giving Tree* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: Why did the boy want to disturb the tree if he liked it when he was young? • Generation of reasons and line of inquiry mapping for why he should have used the tree and why he should have left it alone • Art piece of students' version of their tree if they were in the position of the boy in the story • Modelling of art pieces throughout the artistic process • Written description of why students chose to design their tree the way	Retell Word Choice

	they did • Conferencing with individual students on written descriptions • Prompting questions about why students chose to draw the tree the way they did to scaffold reasoning and philosophical depth • Published work of art piece and description • Retell of *The Giving Tree* • Free writing	
Don't Laugh at Me (Seskin & Shamblin, 2002)	• Reading of *Don't Laugh at Me* • Philosophical questions about *Don't Laugh at Me* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: Why do people bully others? • Generation of reasons and line of inquiry mapping for why people bully others • Fiction narrative written from the perspective of a bully	Narrative Fiction Voice

	• Peer sharing of fictional narratives throughout the process • Additional community of inquiry discussion after time spent writing about the subject: Why do people bully others and how can bullying be resolved? • Fictional narrative from a different perspective (not all students had time for this) • Free Writing	
First Round Reflection Questions (See Appendix A)	• Reflection question responses for metacognitive understanding of the process and feedback • Individual conferencing to assist with understanding • Scribing for students with difficulty	Narrative Fiction Voice
Enemy Pie (Munson, 2000)/*Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* (McCloud,	• Reading of *Enemy Pie* • Free Writing • Philosophical questions about *Enemy Pie* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection	Narrative Fiction Voice

2006). Video data collected for *Enemy Pie*	• Community of inquiry discussion: Why would they play together if they are enemies? • Generation of reasons for why they would have played together if they were enemies • Philosophical questions about *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* • Students generated philosophical questions independently about the two books • Graphic organizer for narrative writing on a topic inspired by one of the books • Some students moved on to narrative writing in their special books • Free writing	
Voices in the Park (Browne, 1998)	• Reading of *Voices in the Park* • Philosophical questions about *Voices in the Park* • Meditation for metacognitive	Narrative Fiction Voice

	reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: Why were the trees designed from a different perspective? Why were they fruit?	
Emily's Art (Catalanotto, 2006)	• Reading of *Emily's Art* • Philosophical questions about *Emily's Art* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: Why did the girl bury her picture in the story? If the judge calls it a different thing it doesn't mean she doesn't like it • Generation of reasons for the situation in the story and line of inquiry mapping • Shared and modelled writing inspired by a philosophical question • Independent philosophical questions inspired by *Emily's Art* • Fictional narratives based on a	Narrative Fiction Voice

	philosophical question of students' choice • Conferencing with individual students and groups of students • Art lesson on foreground, background, dark and light colours for illustrations • Community sharing of *Emily's Art* fictional narratives and peer linking of philosophical questions with content from the fictional narratives • Publishing of fictional narratives inspired by philosophical questions generated from the *Emily's Art* narratives • Free writing	
Second Round Reflection Questions (See Appendix A)	• Reflection question responses for metacognitive understanding of the process and feedback • Individual conferencing to assist with understanding • Scribing for students with difficulty	Narrative Fiction Voice
If (Perry, 1995)	• Reading of *If*	Narrative Fiction

Video data collected for *If*	• Philosophical questions about *If* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: How would someone be able to eat with toes for teeth? • Generation of ideas for the situation in the story and line of inquiry mapping • Generation of "if" statements by students following the structure of the book • Peer sharing of "if" statements • Prompting questions to inspire more depth and variety in "if" statements • Free writing	Voice
The Giving Tree (Silverstein, 1964)/*If* (Perry, 1995)/*Enemy Pie* (2000)	• Poetry lesson on couplets • Modelled and shared writing using couplets and *The Giving Tree* as inspiration • Independent couplet writing on *The Giving Tree* or *If* • Poetry lesson on lyric poetry	Poetry Voice

	• Shared and modelled lyric poetry inspired by *The Giving Tree* • Small group instruction on lyric poetry • Shared writing on *Enemy Pie* • Free writing	
Courage (Waber, 2002)/ *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids* (McCloud, 2006).	• Reading of *Courage* • Philosophical questions about *Courage* • Meditation for metacognitive reflection • Community of inquiry discussion: Are there more types of courage? • Generation of ideas for what courage is and line of inquiry mapping • Prompting questions for supportive reasoning, sustained thinking following a single line of inquiry and depth of thought • Free verse poetry lesson • Largely supported shared free verse writing inspired by *Have You Filled*	Poetry Voice

	a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids • Independent poem inspired by *Courage*, students could freely select the form and structure • Peer sharing of *Courage* poems • Published poetry pieces with illustrations • Free writing	
Third Round Reflection Questions (See Appendix A)	• Reflection question responses for metacognitive understanding of the process and feedback • Individual conferencing to assist with understanding • Scribing for students with difficulty	Poetry Voice
Metacognitive Reflection Questions	• Written responses to the following questions: 1. When you are responding to questions at the carpet can you give reasons to support what you say? How do you know this? 2. Are you able to see more than one side when people have different	Poetry Voice

	opinions? Is it good to have different opinions about something? Why do you think this?	

Appendix E

Qualitative Research Summary Diagram

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Stimulus
The program requires an immediately engaging and accessible stimulus so that students can connect with material and engage in dialogue about it. Comparing picture books and Lipman’s (1982) curriculum, I found that picture books worked better in teaching from a philosophical framework. Students engaged with picture books critically and creatively while sustaining thoughtful dialogue about questions they found authentically interesting.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Community of Inquiry
The community of inquiry must include an environment built on mutual respect where students have an opportunity to dialogue with each other and adjust their understanding of meaning accordingly. The facilitator must understand that autonomous learning takes time and model effective inquiry. The sharing process among community members must be scaffolded to enable success. The support and scaffolding the community of inquiry gave students was remarkable.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Narrative</td></tr>
<tr><td>Narrative Fiction
The Philosophy for children program pairs well with the narrative fiction genre because it allows children to play with creative ideas and provides security because they can synthesize real ideas and</td><td>Personal Narrative
Students used writing to understand their lives better. Some gravitated toward personal narrative.</td></tr>
</table>

concerns through lives of made-up characters and events. Students had been able to play using their imagination. Playing is what narrative fiction has potential to be.	
Reflection Students must be given opportunity to reflect on their ideas and processes through dialoguing in the community of inquiry, writing and sharing their writing and ideas with peers. Metacognitive exercises are necessary for students to reflect on community of inquiry practices including effective listening, depth in thought and equitable participation.	